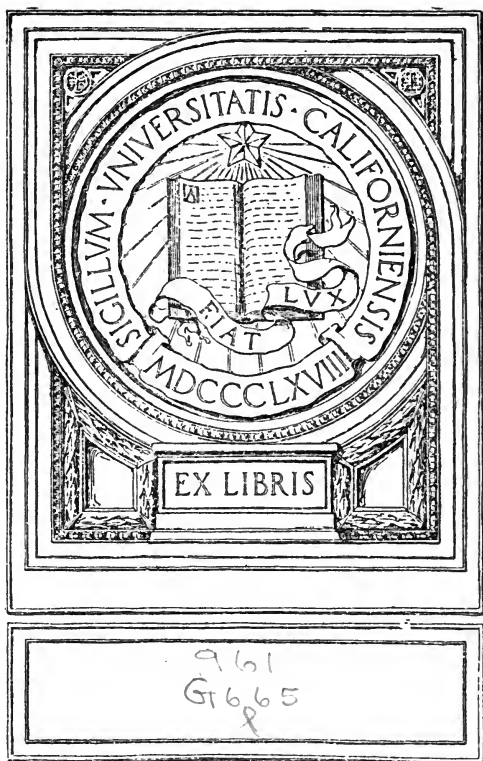
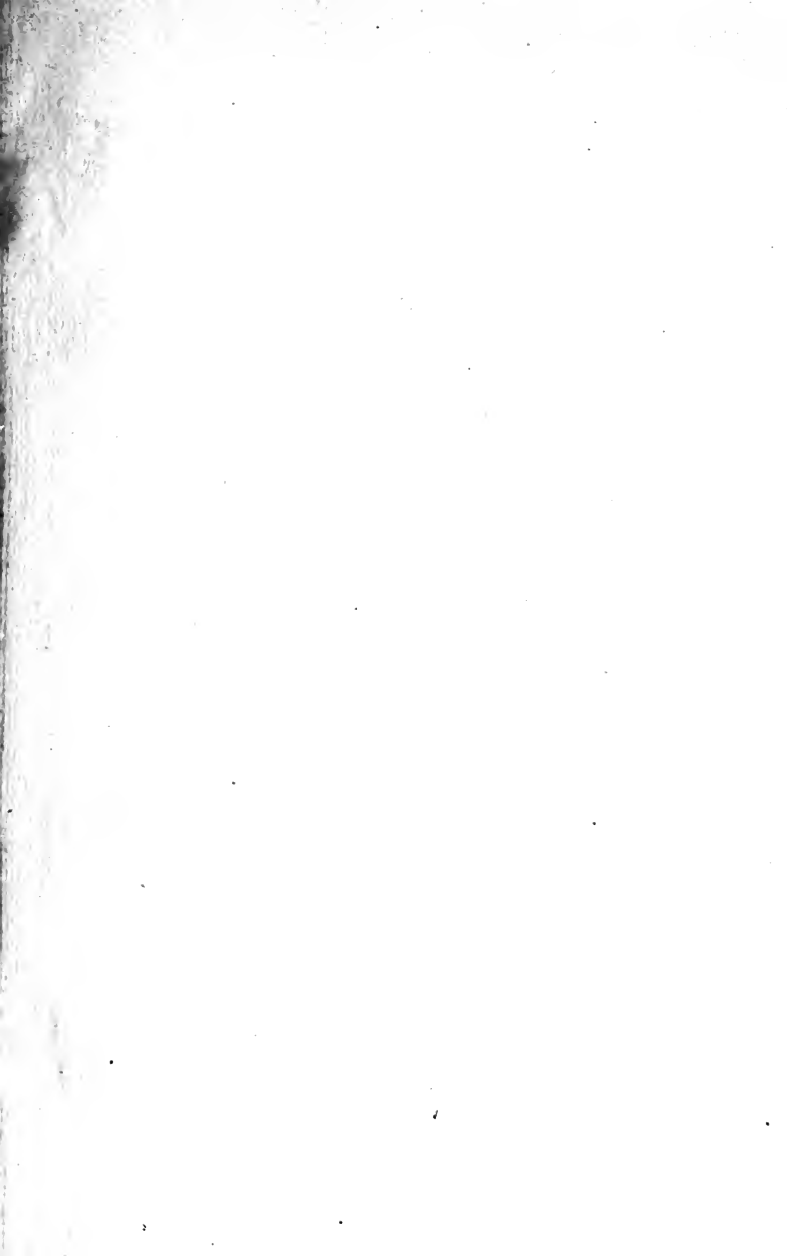


THE LETTERS OF TWO
PEOPLE IN WAR TIME



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THE LETTERS OF TWO
PEOPLE IN WAR TIME

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THE LETTERS OF TWO PEOPLE IN WAR TIME

BY
COSMO GORDON-LENNOX

THE
COSMO GORDON-LENNOX

LONDON
EVELEIGH NASH COMPANY
LIMITED
1916

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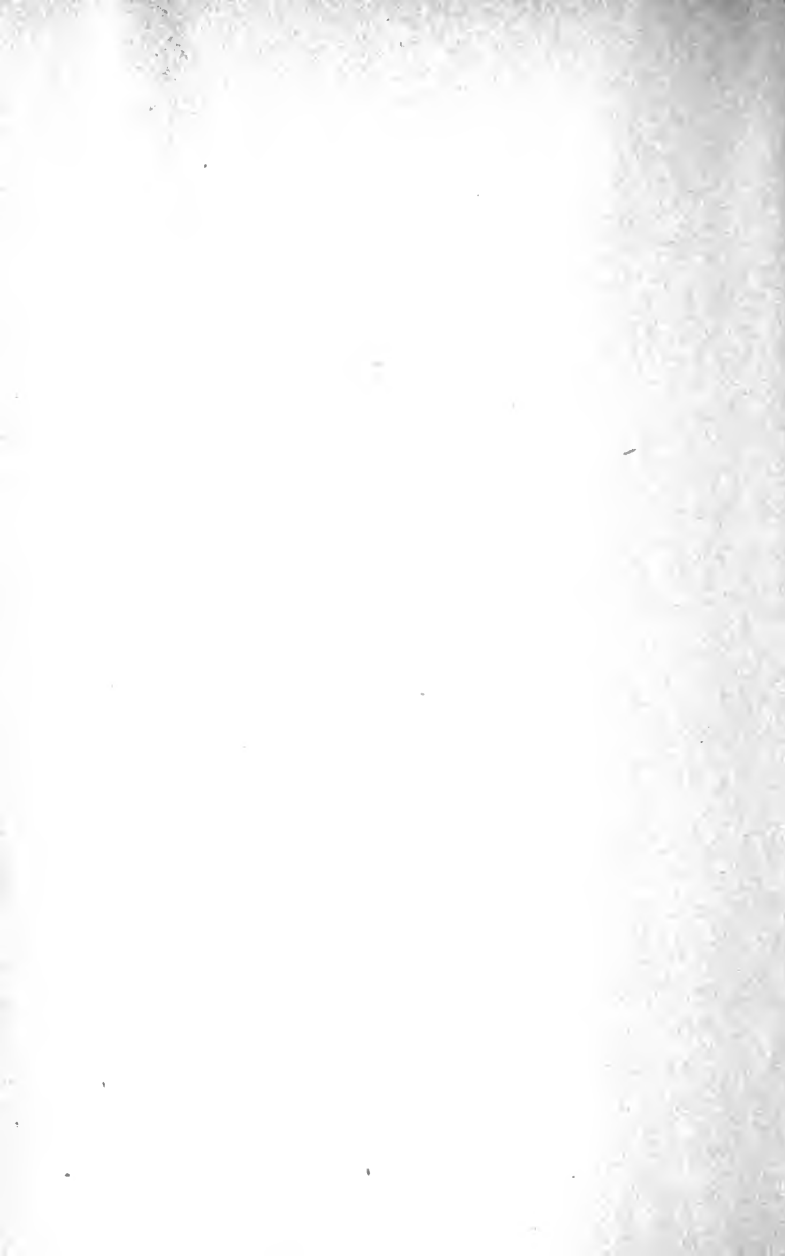
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THE LETTERS OF TWO PEOPLE IN WAR TIME

LETTER I

The letter that was written but never sent.

I WONDER why I write to you?

Is it because your eyes are large and blue—or grey, are they? I scarcely saw.

Or is it because I did see something in that flashing moment—something of your soul?

Probably No, but since I write, possibly Yes.

How enigmatic you are—enigmatic as only simplicity can be.

And your charm—that is more easily described—that trick of the lifted lids—all childhood and frankness—that low, clear voice rippled as a woodland pool is rippled by the first warning of a nearing storm.

We were close together, your hair almost

Letters of Two People

brushed my cheek—I felt your nearness and you moved a little, for one heartbeat we were accomplices.

We shall meet again. I shall see you lift your eyes, whose calm your lips belie, but shall we ever share a guilty thrilling secret as we did in that swift second?

I should imagine your love might be a wonderful thing—so wonderful that I scarcely dare to seek it—and yet I could match your love—but only with love of you. And I am alone in my room, and you are—where?

Sleeping, perhaps? How do you sleep? With one arm bent under your head, the mystery of your eyes veiled, lips parted, with all the seriousness of childhood in your face, your tumbled hair, the hair whose glinting gold was almost against my mouth to-day?

And your dreams?

I scarcely know you, but this I know—what are your dreams no man will ever know.

In War Time

LETTER II

FROM MRS. VANE TO MR. ERIC TREVANNION

By messenger boy

You gave me an invitation to-day, my dear Mr. Trevannion. You were kind enough to invite me to dine with you, to go to the play with you, and when you heard that I lived in the country, you offered to "put me up" at your house for the night.

I suppose you know that that is an impertinence—at least, most women would consider it so. I am going to punish you for your impertinence—I am going to accept the dinner—the play, and the night's lodging. Don't look delighted—I am not accepting the invitation in the spirit in which it was given. I accept for two reasons: the first is that, though I am not a suffragette—at least, not much of one—I think it is good for you to be taught that a woman can meet a man on terms of perfect equality—and that is how I

Letters of Two People

mean to meet you. The second reason is that you annoyed me yesterday; you were talking to my neighbour at tea and you were talking well and seriously about the war as if you meant what you said, and I thought, "I like that man"; then you turned to me and I looked and was frankly pleased. Oh, the vanity, the pitiful vanity of men! You thought I wanted you to make love to me, and you did. My dear man, I don't want you to make love to me. I like you, and the fact that I say so calmly and frankly should show you that I should never even want to flirt with you. Anyhow, that is the case; I should never fall in love with you—you are not the type of man I could ever care for; but you have challenged me and so I accept the challenge, but understand, we are only spending the evening as good pals; I am bored—you are at a loose end till you go back to France, so we will distract each other for an evening, and then "bon soir et au revoir peut être."

CICELY VANE.

PS.—Remember, nothing more than "pals."

PS.—Of course, if you would rather I did not come, under the circumstances, say so,

In War Time

and I shall quite understand; it is really of no importance.

TELEGRAM I

To MRS. VANE, The Stone Cottage, Woodstone,
Surrey.

Shall expect you Wednesday. Thanks. —
TREVANNION.

Letters of Two People

LETTER III

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

5, HARSTOCK STREET,
LONDON.

MY DEAR LITTLE PAL,

Thank you for coming to London—thank you for spending the evening with me—thank you for existing—I like to know that you are alive and on the same world as myself.

I am sitting in the room downstairs, the one you said you liked—the room where we came after the theatre—the room where you let me kiss you—for you did let me kiss you, I don't want to let you forget that. Women can forget so wonderfully and completely—when they really want to. I knew a woman once who forgot so completely that she altered history, or, at least, confused it as utterly as did Shakespeare and Bacon.

But you did let me kiss you. I asked you

In War Time

what would happen if I did. You shrugged your shoulders with such a "sure of myself" air. (What a baby you look sometimes.) I took you in my arms and I kissed you—more than once, and you—you laughed; I have been trying to recall the sound of your laugh, trying to hear in it the smallest falter—the slightest nervous sound, and—honestly I can't. There, that ought to please you. Does it?

I wish I could remember, or rather, picture your face. It is always there before me, but I can't examine it in detail—when I try to it goes—flashes away as you flashed away this morning.

It was nice of you to say "Good-bye, my dear." It was nice of you to give me a gentle little kiss on my cheek before you ran out of the room. Thank you for that too.

Yours sincerely,

ERIC TREVANNION.

PS.—I am sending you the Rupert Brooke poems that you said you liked.

I think them wonderful—they are so much the thoughts of a man.

Letters of Two People

LETTER IV

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

THE STONE COTTAGE,
WOODSTONE.

You really are the most dear person, to send me those altogether wonderful books of Rupert Brooke. Because we both like his poetry so much, it pleases me that they should be your gift. You are a dear. Thank you. You behaved very well on the whole, and I thank you also for a—a—a charming interlude, but—but I am not so sure I ought to have come.

No, my dear friend, don't mistake me, there was no nervous sound in my laugh, nor will there ever be, but is it quite safe for you? When I think of the skilful and charming—yes, charming—way you make love I feel sure you are quite safe, but when I think of you as you are, when you are talking seriously, then I am afraid you

In War Time

might get to feel seriously about me, and that must never happen.

It is raining; I have let the cottage, and I am packing, surely the most hateful occupation in the world. To-morrow I go down to the sea, to Boxtown, to my father, and I am a little homesick for Harstock Street, and a little homesick for its owner in a sensible mood. Well, that's over, au revoir, till we meet again, which will not be for a very, very long time. Good-bye, new friend.

CICELY VANE.

Letters of Two People

LETTER V

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

5, HARSTOCK STREET.

MY DEAR LITTLE PAL CICELY,

I am sending you an implement that you left here. I don't know what it is—it looks dangerous. I have been having a rather worrying time lately, but I won't bore you with the details. Did I tell you I have a cottage in Gloucestershire—miles from a station, with an apple orchard and a tangle of a garden? I go there in a fortnight. Won't you come and stay for a day—a week—or just as long as you could bear it? It sounds boring, but the situation will, I hope, still amuse you for a little, and I should love to see you, you baby Sphinx, in the heart of the country. Somehow, since the war, I love every bit of the mud of England, every blade of grass, every English flower. Come and give me the æsthetic

In War Time

pleasure of seeing you in the English country. Won't you?

I shall be within a few hours of Boxtown next week, at Old Quay Hotel, Merrioneth. When I leave I would stay at Towerside if you could come over and spend twenty-four hours. There is a beach near there, I know, quite a solitary place with three bathing huts, and an old man who provides "lobster teas." Have you ever had a lobster tea after bathing at Morecome Cove? Will you come? Or would you rather wait to resume the situation in Gloucestershire?

ERIC.

Letters of Two People

LETTER VI

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ELSLADE LODGE,
BOXTOWN.

Thanks for the "implement," which is a new kind of hatpin and dangerous only to the wearer.

I suppose it was sufficient excuse for writing, though I don't need the thing a bit.

Gloucestershire, my dear man, is out of the question. I can't leave here for a month, at least. Yes, I fancy Towerside is getatable from here; let me know when you go there. You call me Sphinx, which I like—but Baby Sphinx is foolish. To have thought someone an enigma, and discover them to be just a child, would be very disappointing, particularly for the enigma. Fancy having to fill in one's occupation in the National Register as a "Guessed riddle!"

In War Time

Besides, I am not a baby, or even a child. We are falling into the habit of corresponding and I am not going to write any more to you till we have to arrange about my coming over to Towerside.

How can we forget each other like this, you ridiculous person.

CICELY.

Letters of Two People

LETTER VII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

Who wants to forget?

ERIC.

TELEGRAM II

TO TREVANNION, Old Quay Hotel, Merrioneth.

The last sentence in my letter should read :
How can *you* forget me? et cetera.—VANE.

In War Time

LETTER VIII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

OLD QUAY HOTEL, MERRIONETH,
CORNWALL.

LITTLE PAL OF MINE,

I shall expect you on the Quay at Tower-side at eleven on Wednesday.—by your island steamer. We can stay there or go anywhere else you fancy on Thursday, as Sunday the place is rather full of trippers. We might lay hands on a car and motor. The sea here is as blue and as grey as your eyes—(which are they, blue or grey? I wanted to ask you that the first time we met)—and on fine days it sparkles like your smile, so when I bathe in it I bask in your approbation.

I am so excited at the thought of meeting you on the quay. I have bought a peculiarly elaborate straw hat so as to look like a Summer Number picture, entitled “Waiting for Her.”

Letters of Two People

In all sincerity I am counting the hours till I see you again, little Cicely.

ERIC.

PS.—All my real pals call me by my Christian name.

In War Time

LETTER IX

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ELSLADE LODGE,
BOXTOWN.

DEAR ERIC,

What a life you lead me, corresponding three times a week !

When you asked me to come to Towerside you said one night, and I don't think I can really manage more than two. My father—no, I will tell the truth. You are determined to change the situation—I am determined that it shall not alter, and that the formula “only pals” shall remain as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and I don't think we could keep up the conflict amicably for more than two days.

Remember the formula, please. I honestly think we had much better not meet again for ever so long. But having said I would, I

Letters of Two People

shall come if you want me to, but why not be wise? We are sure to get into dreadful complications.

However, I admit I am looking forward to it, if you will really behave very nicely.

CICELY.

In War Time

LETTER X

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

OLD QUAY HOTEL.

CICELY, MY LITTLE PAL,

I love your flashes of defiance, but why do you insist on thinking of me as a determined desperado? Is it not possible I may be only looking forward to what is very pleasant—seeing you and spending two days in your society? Surely that is how a real pal would look at things.

From ERIC.

Letters of Two People

LETTER XI

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ELSLADE LODGE,
BOXTOWN.

Yes, I like your letter very much. You put me somewhat to school, but that is as it should be—I should hate to have a “floppy” pal. But the formula still holds.

Well, au revoir, Eric, till Wednesday.

I am really looking forward to it.

CICELY.

PS.—It’s really almost “too much fun,” as Lady D—— would say.

In War Time

LETTER XII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

5, HARSTOCK STREET,
11 O'CLOCK P.M.

MY DARLING,

I am writing at eleven as I said I would, and you are sitting alone as you promised. What can I write you now? Only I love you, I love you, and again I love you. Last week I could write easily to you, but now I cannot find words for paper. If you were only here I could draw you near me and say—nothing—just to hold you in my arms is joy enough. I only arrived in London an hour ago and I miss you horribly; it is like a physical pain. I can see you now, standing on the steamer deck, a little slight erect figure, and we looked at each other until the boat carried you away into the mist. Oh, my dear sweet heart, how can I thank you? That you should love me is such a wonderful thing! That

Letters of Two People

you should have told me so ! That you should belong to me ! Dear, I sit here and wonder if I have not dreamt it all. I will try to write you a coherent letter to-morrow. To-night I can only say I love you.

Your ERIC.

In War Time

LETTER XIII

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

BOXTOWN.

MY DEAREST,

I sat in my room last night at eleven, and I knew you would be writing to me as you promised, and I sent tender thoughts to you—something of my love—but, oh! I so longed to creep into your arms and lay my head on your shoulder. To-day I am longing for your voice, your touch, your presence, and yet there is all about me a great joy—I belong to you. And yet you know scarcely anything about me; it was like you not to ask me any questions even after yesterday; still, there are things that will have to be said; but I cannot say them yet, I must keep my happiness a little longer. Dear, you were so sweet to me; you always left me free, otherwise I don't think I should have ever admitted to you that I did care. Do you

Letters of Two People

know when I was sure? You kissed me and I could not laugh. You held me in your arms and I could no longer be the "statue maiden," as you called me in joke. I seemed to lose all consciousness of everything but your nearness, and yet all the time I was thinking—thinking furiously. Even then you left me free, you said "Good night, little girl," so gently, and left me, and then—— Oh, my dear one, I know all this should never have happened, but I can't regret—I can't. I ought to try to draw back even now, but all I can do is to cry to you, Love me, Eric—love me.

Your CICELY.

In War Time

LETTER XIV

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

BOXTOWN.

Eric—Eric! I can bear it no longer! I must write you the truth! Probably you'll hate me, probably you will disbelieve my love, but it is because I do love you that I can't lie to you.

Oh, my dear lover, I have done you a great wrong! What has happened should never have happened. It was not your fault, dear, but mine—all mine.

My dear, the story I have to tell you is a shameful one, but that is not why I suffer in writing it; I have no right even to shame, but I suffer because I know I am going to hurt you, and I shall hurt you because you love me really. And, selfish that I am, I can't regret that, even now.

Eric, I am not free. I am bound to one of the

Letters of Two People

best and kindest men in the world, a man to whom I owe everything, even my life.

I have never spoken to you of my marriage, Though I was only a child, the memory of it is so terrible that I dare not think of it even now. My husband not only treated me cruelly, but he did worse. Eric, he degraded me; he dragged me down to his own level—he made me what I am, indelibly. I see that to-night. And I thought I had grown so strong. There is a moral as well as a physical contagion, and hour by hour everything that was good in me became contaminated — diseased — loathsome. Only a woman can know what it is to hate and despise a man and yet to know herself bound to him—bound by her own weakness. I grew to loathe myself as one might loathe something physically unclean, and I had cause.

And you thought I was a child !

There was only one escape for me—death, and toward that gate I made up my mind to hasten; but I was not even strong enough for that, and at the last moment I was afraid. I ran out of the house into the darkness, I scarcely knew why or where. I stumbled blindly to the only refuge I had, the friend I have told you of. He had

In War Time

known me since I was a little girl, he had watched over me, suffered with me. I think he guessed part of the truth, but I have never dared to tell a living soul what I am writing to you to-night. He took me in, he hid me away, he nursed me back to health and sanity. He took me to lawyers, and a divorce was arranged. My husband did not defend the case, he was paid money to spare my name.

At last I was free, and then and only then I began to realize what I owed to the one friend I had in the world, and in the same hour he told me why he had done all this—because he loved me. He has never loved anyone before or since. I am the love of his life. And if anything were to touch his love and trust in me, it would mean worse than death to him. I am his very life. He has given up all for me—and I just accepted everything.

What money I had my husband had squandered. The expenses of the case were paid for by my friend. I had better tell you frankly: to this day the bread I eat, the clothes I wear, are bought by him. Don't think that he ever schemed to catch me in a net. He has always been splendid and good. I went to him of my own accord, and

Letters of Two People

I am his of my own free will and bound by every tie in the world. He is a Roman Catholic, and cannot marry a divorced woman or he would have even given me his name.

Don't you see, dear love of mine, whom I love passionately and with all my soul, what I have to say to you now? I have to give up the greatest joy that I have ever known. I could not give, nor could you accept anything that was not all yours. Oh, my dear, if we had only met years ago. Tell me, you who are big and wise and strong, is there no way out? I love you and I can't lose you, and yet I must. Oh, my lover, if I could creep into your arms and wake to find all this a nightmare! Don't hate me, though I have given you every cause. Help me! Help me!

Your miserable CICELY.

In War Time

LETTER XV

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

MY LITTLE GIRL,

If I loved you yesterday—I love you a hundred times more since I have read your letter. You gave me yourself, indeed, when you wrote it. I can't tell you the tenderness, pity and love that surged through my heart as I read it. Dear, I admire you beyond the power of words to express, and I thank you for the great proof of love you have given me. I can't tell you how I long for you to-night. I have just had news that my greatest friend has been killed in action. God bless him! and I feel desperately unhappy and lonely. Oh, my little tender love, there must be a way out. I will find one, I will, rest assured of that. Good night, beloved.

Letters of Two People

LETTER XVI

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

MY DARLING,

I don't know what kind of letter I wrote you last night. I know I only wanted to put my arms round you—to protect you from all hurt, past and present—to care for you as if you were my child, and I wanted to tell you this. Did I, dear?

I have been thinking, thinking, ever since I got your letter; twisting and turning the same thoughts round in my head. My sweet heart, I can only find one answer to the problem, and that I won't admit. I won't.

I went to see poor Jack Treherne's sister to-day (Jack was the friend I told you of in my last letter), and she told me of his death. He was wonderful, laughing and joking to the last. Why does everyone expect that the war changes

In War Time

men who are on active service? It does not change any one—they are just themselves, faults and all, only with something added, something higher, finer, the little spark we all used to be afraid of admitting we had in England—the thing that used not to be good form.

I don't remember if I told you that I had twice tried to get out, but that I have always failed to pass my medical. Well, I am going to try again. They want officers badly, and I think I can pass. Anyhow, I am going to try again on Saturday. You understand, don't you—I *must*. Since I heard that the brutes had got poor old Jack I can't rest here. I must go out and have a shy at them. You do understand, don't you? For every reason I ought to go, and I should have gone long before if it had not been for this confounded heart of mine. I have no one dependent on me, I am quite alone in the world, there is no one to whom my getting picked off would make the slightest difference—except you, little girl, and in time you would—not forget—but remember gently. I think you will always do that. If I come through all right, we shall have had time to think it out, and perhaps we shall see clearly then. If I don't get through—well,

Letters of Two People

perhaps, after all, a clean bullet would be the best solution.

Poor old Jack. He left me some of his things to keep for him in Gloucestershire! He wrote me only ten days ago to see his golf sticks were put in a dry place, and now——. His sister and mother are splendid. His mother said: "I always knew my boy would justify my pride in him—and he has done so amply and entirely. I don't complain. I am an old woman now, and with his example I ought to be able to bear it—it will only be for a little time." There was scarcely a shake in her voice, but she looks frightfully old and broken, and I know it means the end of everything to her. Cicely, it's awful, everywhere the same story—the terrible agony and wonderful heroism of men and women. But it's all for England, so it's worth while. Dear, if I have the luck to pass, you will let me see you before I go, won't you? Even if it's difficult—even if it's impossible, you will come to me all the same, and you'll write to me all the time? Oh, my dear little child—my little child.

ERIC.

In War Time

LETTER XVII

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

MY DEAR ONE,

Teach me to feel about England as you do—teach me to be as fine as you are. I will try so hard to learn—but oh, my man, I can't feel anything but a blank terror at the idea of your going out. No, I would not say "Don't go," but only for one reason—that what you decide is best and must be (and I wrote to you once that men and women should be on an equality!) I wonder if you know how dear every inch of a man's body is to the woman who loves him. It is the mother in us, I suppose, but the thought that the hands that have pressed mine should be crushed, the arms that have shielded me should—oh, my dear, if I let myself think of it I shall go mad. Yes, of course, I will come to you before you go, and nothing shall prevent it. I wish I had known your friend. I would like to have a part in every-

Letters of Two People

thing you love in the world. Dear, I can't lose you, I can't. My father has been ill lately and I must stay on here with him. He has never been much to me in my life—I was sent home from India as a child—but he is old and he wants me, and in three weeks I must go home again. Eric, what can I do? Shall I have one try to see if I could free myself? To be free! Free to go to you.

Good night, my love. Telegraph me the result of the board, won't you?

Your loving CICELY.

In War Time

TELEGRAM III

MRS. VANE, Elslade Lodge, Boxton.

They refuse to pass me.—ERIC.

LETTER XVIII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE.

You ask me, little heart of mine, if you shall try to get free to come to me. I can only give you one answer. I never cease to think of you day and night—I want you now and always. I can't advise you; you alone know what is possible. I can only say again I want you—I shall always want you.

I telegraphed you the result of the medical. I am not even good enough to stop a bullet, but I have found something to do. I met a friend who has been working at St. Johns since war broke out, and he has offered me to go out to take

Letters of Two People

charge of some ambulances that are being sent to the French, and I am going. I go out as soon as the cars are ready and take them to Harlay-le-bois, where we are to work under French military authority. I may have to leave any day from Tuesday and, alas! I can't get away from town, as to-morrow I have to go with Lord Norreys, who is at the head of the St. John motor ambulance department, to see the cars; and the day after I must have an interview with my lawyer to settle business, etcetera. You promised you would come—don't fail me. I must see you before I go. My dear love you will forgive me for leaving England and understand, won't you?

Yours lovingly

ERIC.

In War Time

TELEGRAM IV

ERIC TREVANNION 5 Harstock Street, London.

Coming up by night train. Staying with my old governess Mlle Brunet 116 Melville Street Brompton. Whatever you decide is right.—
CICELY.

TELEGRAM V

ERIC TREVANNION c/o British Red Cross, Hôtel de Paris Boulogne.

Goodbye. God bless and keep you.

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LETTER XIX

ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

HÔTEL DES ARCADES,
DUNQUERQUE.

MY DARLING,

WE had a very bad journey from London. We burst three tyres on the way, and only got to the coast at half-past one in the morning. The hotel was full and the big boat not running, so we couldn't sleep on board, and spent a stuffy night in the smoking-room of the hotel. The harbour was very wonderful, the raging rough sea lit up by the searchlights that hardly ever leave the entrance. They say an enemy submarine nearly got in last week. Then scrambling over the railway lines in the pitch dark on the pier and every five hundred yards being confronted by the perpetual challenge of a sentry: "Who goes there?" "Friend." "Pass, friend." All unreal and war.

In War Time

We got the cars on board with some difficulty at six in the morning and left at 6.30. We'd had nothing to eat, and no breakfast was to be discovered; but half way over the ship's officers extended a very grateful hospitality to us. Two of my drivers—the Yorkshire lads—(by the way, they've never been outside Yorkshire till yesterday)—were so sound asleep that I didn't dare wake them, especially as I don't think they much relished their first taste of the sea. So, as it was not till 12.0 that we were able to get any food, they were nearly knocked out. I had hoped to get on to Harlay to-day. But there are interminable difficulties to be overcome. There is no petrol to be had for love or money at Dunquerque, as it has all been commandeered, and there seemed to be some doubt as to whether we were entitled to get it from the British Red Cross, but eventually Lionel Holland, who has been doing splendid work here, representing the Red Cross, let us have some, and at three o'clock we went to French headquarters to get a pass to take us into the French lines, hoping to make Boulogne at least to-night, but after endless discussions, in voluble French (you know my conversation is second to none—in volubility at least), it was decided

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that we must go up to English G. H. Q. situated at that town whose name, of course, nobody knows, and which it would be the height of indiscretion for me to reveal. I may add that we English are strictly forbidden to enter that Holy of Holies, so heaven only knows how we shall get on to-morrow. Of course, it was impossible to start this evening, as it is three hours' run from here, so there was nothing for it but to take what accommodation we could get at the hotel here, which is already crowded with Belgian officers.

Cicely, dear, you were very beautiful and very wonderful in those few hours we spent together—Is it only two days ago?—and very brave. I should like to thank you for it, but there is so much that I am grateful to you for that I can't begin. That you should care for me—there are no words to tell you how I thank you for that. I thank you even for living on the same world as myself. Those last three hours we spent together—I can see it all so plainly now—the colour of the wallpaper of the little restaurant, the background to your face—the shape of the table, the half-dead flowers in the vase, the comic-looking old woman who was dining next to us; and I feel tenderly towards them all—

In War Time

even to the waiter who served us so badly. And there were moments when we laughed. We always do laugh somehow when we're together, don't we, dear? Oh, little girl, little girl, you're so much part of my life, it's all so natural, so inevitable, that it must come right. Write and tell me that it must. You see, dear, you're being punished for your bravery, for to-night it is I who lean on you—and oh, my beloved, you seem so very far away. The square lies outside my window—dark, mysterious and peaceful—with the statue of Jean Bart, towering in the centre. The clocks have just struck—the chimes are still ringing all over the silent town; and now, as I look slowly down the street into the square, comes a dull, rumbling grey procession—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine ambulances—the procession of the wounded.

Good night, sweet heart mine; good night, good night.

From ERIC.

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LETTER XX

FROM CICELY VANE TO MONSIEUR ERIC
TREVANNION

Aux bons soins de le Medecin en chef,
Lanvin.
Ambulance 102,
Groupe 78
Harlay-le Bois,
France.

ROBINSON'S HOTEL,
LONDON.

MY DARLING,

You'll be surprised to see that I am back again in London, but my father has suddenly taken it into his head to come up to consult a specialist. So here we are for a week. Only twenty-four hours ago you were here, and now I don't even know where you have got to on your journey. And it hurts me not to know. I think I was dazed all through the night-journey

In War Time

going home, but all through the night I was saying to myself, "Now Eric is back at Harstock Street—now he is in the room downstairs"—the room where you kissed me and I laughed. (Do you remember writing to me not to forget.) And then next morning I thought, "Now he is on the road to Dover," and then, "Now he is on the boat," "Now the boat has left." Oh, my dear I did try so hard to be brave, but I'm not really. I'm not clever, I'm not nice, I'm not strong, I'm not any of the things you think me, but because you believe in me so much, I will try, indeed I will. You will laugh when you read what I have to tell you now. You know I passed all my First Aid and Nursing Exams. at the beginning of the war, when everybody had that first burst of enthusiasm, and then I let the whole thing slide. But now I want to take it up again, not from any high reason, but for two others: one, I can't go back to the country and take up my life as it was; I can't, at least, not yet. The other reason is that if I can get something to do in a hospital I shall be working at the same thing as you are working at, and it will seem to make another bridge between us although you are so far away. I went to the College of Ambulance to-day, where

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I did my course of lectures. There's a dear, jolly old Scotchwoman, Mrs. Macdonald, who's at the head of it, and I asked her to find something for me. There were three or four other women there, I fancy on the same errand, but Mrs. Macdonald seemed to think she might find me something. I am going back to see her again the day after to-morrow. She has given me a letter to the Vicomtesse de la Panouse, the head of the French Red Cross in London. Of course I shall wire you if anything comes of all this. If I could only get out to France! It would be something to know I was in the same country as you are. Write me whenever you get a chance and think of me every moment. Oh, if I could creep into your arms, put my head on your shoulder, and forget everything!

CICELY.

In War Time

LETTER XXI

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE.

HÔTEL DES TROIS CHAPEAUX,
BOULOGNE.

3 o'clock in the morning.

CICELY DEAR,

It is a very dirty, very wet, and very tired man who writes to you. We left Dunquerque at 7.0 this morning for Harlay-le-Bois and have now arrived at Boulogne. I told you in my last letter that the French authorities declined to give us a pass into the French lines and sent us up to G.H.Q. As it is absolutely forbidden for any stray British to go there I thought it more than likely we might be arrested by the sentries on attempting to enter the town. But somehow or other we were passed in, drove up the main street and passed the house where HE lives. He, I need hardly tell you, stands for

Letters of Two People

Sir John. How one changes. I looked at the walls and door of that very ordinary French house with a feeling of respect and hero-worship that I had not felt since my schoolboy days when to be on the same earth as the Captain of the First Eleven seemed to be an honour too great for mortal shoulders to bear. We saw the Prince of Wales come out and get into his car. He has filled out and looks splendidly fit. They tell me here that everyone, both officers and men, who come in contact with him adore him.

Then we got to the Provost Marshal's and exhibited our papers. We each have (1) a passport, (2) an identity card and brassard of the Red Cross from the English R.A.M.C., (3) ditto from the French Red Cross, (4) a personal letter from the Colonel le Vicomte de la Panouse, French military attaché at the French Embassy in London. They told us that it was impossible to have any more papers (it would certainly be impossible to carry about any more without becoming permanently lop-sided), but the English authorities cannot give anyone a pass into the French lines. So we were told to go to Boulogne, and off we started after a hurried meal.

And now commences our chapter of accidents.

In War Time

You will remember that I told you we were taking out hospital stores partly given by the French Red Cross in London, partly by St. John's: a hundred pairs of sheets, medical tabloids, jam, biscuits, shirts, splints, et cetera, all elaborately packed in bales and wooden cases, which filled up every ambulance. We found the main road to Boulogne was closed, so we had to take the "Route Secondaire." My car was closing the procession. The first three cars got well ahead and out of sight (we found afterwards they had taken a wrong turning and went twenty miles out of their way). Suddenly my car stopped, and after a certain amount of swimming on one's stomach in the mud, we discovered that we had broken the back axle. There was nothing to do but to abandon the car by the road side, but as it was impossible to leave the stores, I sent on the preceding car, driven by Jack, one of the Yorkshire lads, to try and find some sort of house where he could empty his own load of stores and come back to fetch ours, while we emptied our packing-cases into the road (why are packing-cases and bales made in such an awkward shape, and with nothing by which you can possibly catch hold of them?). After about an hour back

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came Jack. He had left his stores at a wine shop in the village, or rather a group of huts some miles away. But he had discovered that we had overloaded the car and we did not dare to send our entire load to the haven of refuge in one journey. Off he went with half; two hours passed, it was growing dark and pelting cats and dogs. At last I walked up the road to try and find him. He had punctured a tyre two miles from us, and was putting on the new one while he addressed the car in endearing (!) terms in what I charitably suppose to be a Yorkshire patois, though it sounded surprisingly like Billingsgate. At last we got back to the derelict, took the stores on board and, after stripping everything off that could possibly be stolen, we started for Boulogne. A violent wind got up and the rain had changed to sleet, then both the lamps went out, and we had to light one of those removed from the other car, which I held in my hands on the splashboard. There is no wind-screen to the car. Such a drive! literally blinded by the sleet, and one's hands absolutely frozen and numbed by holding the flickering, badly burning lamp. Up-hill and down-hill, about four foot of hard road in the middle—on each side deep ruts—axle deep in

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mud. Then we realised that the petrol was running short and all the spare tins were in the cars that had gone on ahead. The Yorks lad confides to me that he has had no experience of night-driving.

Suddenly a voice out of the hedge: "Hullo, I'm British Red Cross. I'm broken down. Can you give me a tow?" We couldn't. We were going in the opposite direction and didn't dare add another pound's weight to the car. Sorry." "Oh, it doesn't matter. I shall turn in and have a sleep on a stretcher. Some of our convoy will be passing in an hour or two. Good night, good luck!"

More jolting, more wind, more sleet, with the addition of a little hail, useful at any rate in convincing one that one's nose had not lost all sense of feeling.

Suddenly out of the hedge a voice in English, a clerical voice: "Hullo! British Red Cross." "What is it?" "Oh, I am in dire distress"—spoken exactly in the tone of "Here endeth the first lesson." Cicely, dear, it was not so much the voice of a clergyman, as the voice of an actor impersonating a curate. "Oh, I wonder if you can help me. I have been sent to fetch an in-

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fectious patient from the hospital at X, twenty three kilometres off. I am afraid he will be suffering some inconvenience, as I was expected there two hours ago. Can you not go in my place? ” “ Very sorry, impossible, unless you can lend us a spare tin of petrol.” “ Oh, how unfortunate ! I haven't a drop.” “ Very sorry, nothing doing. How far is Boulogne? ” “ Ten miles away. Will you kindly tell them at the Hôtel de Paris that Driver the Rev. J. H. Brown would be very grateful for a little help, as he has broken down at this spot.” You see he was a parson, Cicely, and not a truthful one, for the ten kilometres were fifteen miles, I swear.

At last Boulogne. We tumbled into the hotel, more like muddy sponges than human beings. In the hall Maxine Elliot, beautiful and capable, on her way to feed the refugees from Belgian villages. I should be ashamed to meet most women in my filthy state—but she looks so un-picturesquely got up and so workmanlike that I am only glad to see her. A group of Englishmen—Kennerly Rumford, two King's Messengers drivers, and some others. We're just sitting down to hot food (how I love hot food, Cicely) when I remember Driver the Rev. J. H. Brown.

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Can I telephone to the Hôtel de Paris? "Oh, non, Monsieur; il y a longtemps que le telephone ne marche plus." I tear the Yorkshire lad from his plate of soup (I have a feeling that if I have many more services of this kind to ask of him, he'll go back to Sheffield). Out we go again. At the Hôtel de Paris, another muddy, deplorable entrance we find Mr. Daniel, busy but kind and helpful; we report the sad case of Driver the Rev. J. H. Brown, and I suggest that the Red Cross should let us have a car, to tow in the derelict on the morrow. "Personally I should be delighted. But you're St. John's. Am I justified in using the Red Cross cars?" "But I thought we were amalgamated." "So we are, but I take it you belong to the brigade. Now, concerning the amalgamation of the brigade—" Cicely, never, never be drawn into a discussion of the amalgamation of St. John's and the Red Cross. The truth of the matter is too fine for human knowledge. It should be locked in the breast of some latter-day sphinx. (I don't mean our mutual friend, the talented and fair-haired authoress.) I swear to you that, though I've spent fifteen hours on the box of an ambulance, broken a back axle, and confronted the possibility of

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having to sleep the night on a stretcher in company with an inconveniently large case of biscuits, I should have gone to bed comparatively fresh, had it not been for that final discussion of the amalgamation of St. John's and the Red Cross. However, Daniel, like a good fellow, thinks he can arrange something for the derelict to-morrow, and we return to food and blessed beds.

Good night, my Cicely. Has my long story bored you? While I was writing it seemed almost as if you sat there listening to my adventures, but alas! dear, you are in London—how many miles away—surely a thousand at least.

From your

ERIC.

In War Time

LETTER XXII

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ROBINSON'S HOTEL,
LONDON.

DEAR,

I got your letter this morning, and I loved it. I love to know every detail of what you are doing, but all the same it causes me a little pang to read of this other life of yours, a life in which there is nothing to remind you of me. It is selfish to write this to you, and silly, I know, but I can't help it. I think I shall feel happier when I know that you've got a letter from me. I trust that you've got to Harlay safely by now. I have bought a large map of France and marked Harlay with a cross, and I look at it, and look at it as if it could tell me something of you. I have been trying really hard, Eric dear, to get something to do. If only I could get out to France! I feel rather ashamed

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of myself now, for since I have been going round in quest of a "job," I've come across so many women who are working unobtrusively at uninteresting office work night and day. Ever since war broke out Mrs. Cantlie, Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Macdonald have been slaving away all day and every day at Vere Street, unadvertised, unrewarded, but just helping splendidly. I might so easily have done that myself, though, if I had, I suppose I should never have met you, and I can't regret that, even with my brain, I can't even wish that I could. Eric, how I envy men. They always have work and action as a drug in sorrow, and I—nothing could console me except your arms tight around me.

CICELY.

In War Time

LETTER XXIII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO CICELY VANE

AMBULANCE 102,
GROUPE 78,
HARLAY-LE-BOIS.

MY DARLING,

I got here at 4.0 this afternoon, but somehow or other I never got your letters till half an hour ago. Reading them was like a message from another world, a world where there is beauty, the love of women, and peace. The desolation of this place! I've always loved France, but the misery of it all now makes her still dearer to me. I have had such good times in this country, and I love the sun of France and her people. I wonder, dear, shall we ever come here together. I feel as if there was a grey cloud between you and me, a barrier that I must not even long to tear down, and yet I love you so tenderly, so very, very tenderly, little love of mine.

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We got here, as I told you, at half-past four in the pitch dark, and all I've seen of the village is mud, mud of every colour and every degree of consistency, or the lack of it. When we arrived we were shown the way to the head hospital, through a gate in some high iron railings. We slopped and slithered over what, I take it, was either once a stiff French garden, or was going to be. We found the *medecin-en-chef* in a little overheated office, with flaring gas. He explained to us that we were under military authority, and warned us that he was a military martinet and a great stickler for rules. He was a military doctor, but has been out of the army for years until war broke out, and the Frenchmen tell me that he is hardworking and extremely kind and considerate. He told us to leave our kits at the hospital, and said he would look after our billets, but that we must begin work at once. Accordingly, escorted by the leader of the French convoy, we climbed on to the cars, plunged into the mud and darkness, on our way to ambulance 64/15. This is a regimental hospital, which has been installed in almost the only large villa here—the ordinary ugly modern French villa, and in

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the dark the wounded were carried out by the dim light of the hall lamp. We had to help with the stretchers, as the orderlies are terribly over-run with work in the hospital. I had two Frenchmen and two Germans in my car; and off we started to Rouxville, seventeen kilometres from here. A long, straight road, like a switchback, between rows of poplars. Here and there terrible holes, and it was impossible to help giving the car some nasty jolts. Then past the sentry at the gate of Rouxville. Then two kilometres of jolting cobbles. The Germans in the car called out and holloaed all the time. I opened the window and tried to reassure them, for I think they were more frightened than anything else. But alas! my German is limited, and all I could think of to say was, "Das weg ist schlecht es thut mir leid." We were taking them to a large clearing hospital, which has been installed in the goods station at Rouxville. Such an approach in the pitch dark! Threading our way over railway lines, in and out of trains, almost blinded by the glaring lights of other ambulances as they passed us on the narrow, muddy tracks. Then, in a crowd of French, American and English

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ambulances we stopped. I can tell you that turning a car under such circumstances approaches a fine art. The inside of the goods station is filled with rows of beds standing on the rails. At the entrance there are five rows of benches filled with the sitting-up cases, waiting to pass the major at the desk. Such a collection, Cicely, of weary, filthy, sordid, pain-stricken humanity. The stretchers are carried into an inner room or tent. There the men were changed on to hospital stretchers, and ours were returned to us. When we got back to Harlay the convoy dinner had already begun. Our companions embrace every variety of profession. The French convoy leader is a wholesale carpet manufacturer and a splendid fellow. We have a motor-bus mechanic, an architect, a provincial bailiff, an Italian aviator, the son of a French general and a professional chauffeur among others. All very friendly, cheerful and anxious to make us at home. We dined in a room opposite the hospital, which is, I should say, the lumber room of the local veterinary surgeon, in whose house it is. He is a prisoner in Germany. The paper is hanging off the walls, but there is a small French stove in the corner,

In War Time

which, thank goodness, heats itself red hot. Dinner, eaten off the oilcloth-covered table, consists of hot water and grease, with bits of bread floating about in it, which is called soup; bits of beef steak without any gravy, and plates of a thick green liquid which thinks it is beans, jam and cheese. Everybody complains of and swears at the food in different languages and patois, but everyone eats it. It is cooked over the road at the hospital by our own cook, a young French soldier who is a florist by profession. He may be a very good florist. The Yorkshire lads are teetotallers, which is awkward for them, as all there is to drink is *petit vin bleu*, and water is out of the question. There are notices stuck up everywhere, warning the inhabitants that to drink it is dangerous to life. At half-past nine, through the main street of the village, by the light of the indispensable electric torch you gave me, I stumbled to my billet, and I am writing this from a divinely comfortable French bed.

Darling, will you understand me if I say that, in spite of everything, I would rather be here? I love you, dear, and it seems to me that out here I have more right to love you. Do you under-

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stand? I think I can hear the guns booming in the distance as I write.

Good-night, my sweet heart. —

From Eric, who belongs to you and who wants you.

In War Time

LETTER XXIV

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ROBINSON'S HOTEL.

MY DEAREST,

I have read and re-read your letters. I love you for writing me such detailed accounts of your life—how did you know that that was what I wanted more than anything? I can see now the place you are in, the work you are doing, and it brings me a little closer to you.

Eric, dear, I am happier to-day than I have been since you left. I have got a job in France—only a temporary one, but that is better than nothing. A V.A.D. in the Anglo-colonial hospital is coming home for a rest, and I go to take her place. I leave to-morrow. My address will be Nurse Vane, Anglo-Colonial Hospital, Tarreaux, près Boulogne-sur-Mer. I have had a bad day and a tiring day, there were so many things to get, and there were good-byes to be said; dear,

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do you understand? Oh, my dearest man, I suppose I have a conscience hidden somewhere, and I felt ashamed that I was glad to go for more reasons than the apparent ones—but still, I can't feel ashamed of loving you. After all, it has made me at least want to be better than I have been; I want to be worthy of so much that I see and respect and love in you. I know I don't deserve your love. I behaved badly to you in the beginning and worse to myself. Only you were you, and it all came right.

Your loving CICELY.

PS.—I must tell you, though I have tried hard not to write it, I wish you could see me in my nurse's cap. I don't look bad in it at all. I oughtn't to think of that, I know. Are you shocked?

In War Time

LETTER XXV

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

CICELY,

These splendid Frenchmen! These splendid Frenchmen! I cannot describe their heroism, their patience in suffering, their gratitude for the smallest attention—their childlike readiness to laugh in the midst of agony. In writing of them I resent having to use words that have been used to describe so many meaner things. All my life I have been often in France. I have admired French wit, enjoyed French art, literature and theatre, appreciated the charm of the Parisienne and loved the personality of Paris—but till now I have never known the great, courageous heart of France.

I have been all day in the midst of smashed men, crushed men, men mangled almost out of human shape, and yet I have not heard one single word of complaint. If people at home could

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only see the sights we see—the heartrending, heroic sights, surely they would take the war more seriously; there are pompous, protesting letters about trivialities in the English papers, which make me hot with shame to read.

From five o'clock till ten we have been working at a large barn here, used in normal times to store the wool for the jersey manufactory. We go up a narrow muddy lane, where there is just room for two ambulances to pass. It is pitch dark, except at the entrance to the barn, where the glare of the cars that are bringing in the wounded is almost blinding. Up a ladder of four crazy steps is the entrance, over which a curtain of sailcloth has been rigged. The huge place has two large stoves in the middle (we went to Rouxville this morning to get a third, as it grows colder and colder every day). These stoves grow red hot, and on one some of the women of the “pays,” who do all the nursing here, are cooking. Round these are three or four rows of benches, and on them huddle fifty or sixty “assis,” the sitting-up cases. All round is thickly-spread straw, and lying on or half buried in it are scores and scores of wounded, bleeding, crying out in agony, or mercifully sleeping in spite of the perpetual noise

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of bringing in and out the loaded stretchers. I saw a man brought in absolutely covered in blood from head to foot, his bandages were soaked through and through. In the corner of the barn a space has been scraped away in the straw, and there the doctors are dressing the wounds. There must have been heavy fighting, as they have been bringing them in all day without stopping, and for five hours we have been taking them down to the train. We took an incredible number—did we not do so they would soon overflow into the lane.

All this may sound inadequate to people at home, but no one can realise what an immensity of organisation, hard work, ingenuity and devotion it represents. When our *medecin-en-chef* arrived here first, he had no ambulances of any kind—only some carts destined for the transport of his hospital material; after some weeks the horses were all unfit for further work, and he had to install his hospital in tents near the station, so that the stretchers could be carried by bearers; but no bearer could last long at that work, and not until he got the French voluntary convoy could he install himself in the school buildings where he now is. It was no one's

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fault; the French were no more expecting war than we were. Ambulance 102 is an evacuation hospital, and we are only supposed to keep the patients one night, with the exception of those who are in need of immediate operation and are too bad to be moved—these are put to bed in the Ecole Normale; but sometimes the others have to stay longer, as we can't clear them away quickly enough. They seem to sleep comfortably in the straw. Every man is fed, and not one leaves the place without having had his wounds re-dressed. The doctors were working all last night, and are doing so to-night, both in the barn and also at the Ecole des Filles, whose classrooms, strewn with straw, serve the same purpose. It is strange how methodical one soon gets. I don't think one loses one's pity for each individual, but it gets merged into one great pity for the whole of suffering humanity. I have seen some dreadful sights to-night, dear, and I pray I may never forget one detail of them all my life. We have to change the men from the hospital stretchers to the train stretchers at the station—often a very painful job for the poor chaps; but do you know that, however bad they are, there is scarcely one that doesn't hold

In War Time

out a dirty hand to us as he is carried away with a poor, suffering smile of thanks on his face.

All my drivers are splendid chaps and work well. Neither of the Yorkshire lads speaks a word of French, but they manage to convey a sense of friendliness to their wounded, rather in the same way as two nice dogs might get on with each other. I am writing this in bed, dear, and shall post it to-morrow. I have got the little kodak picture of you, but I hate photographs—they are like enough to hurt one, and not like enough to satisfy one. Dear, it is not only your beauty I love, but your personality—your presence—perhaps I mean your soul. Good night, my little love.

ERIC.

I open this to re-direct it to "Nurse Vane." I am so glad, dear, but take great care of yourself for my sake. I loved your postscript about the cap. Don't get too splendid, little girl; I might not recognise you—that is an impertinence, is it not? I have got a ripping billet here with a Mlle. Durelle, a dear old lady, and her two nice old servants, Noel and Marie. She gives me an excellent breakfast of *café au lait* and

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bread-and-butter, which is very welcome, as at the mess we only get black coffee and dry bread. I am writing this on the step of the ambulance I have just cleaned down (inside, that is, as we just leave the mud on the outside until it is too heavy, and then knock it off with a hammer). There is a Taube circling over us on its way to Rouxville, and it comes so low we can see the black crosses on its ugly great wings. Dear, I am not a bit fine. One of the reasons I am glad you're in France is that you will be alone—do you understand? I know I ought not to write it—I know I ought not to think of such a thing; but there it is, I do. Love me, faults and all, Cicely mine.

ERIC.

In War Time

LETTER XXVI

FROM CICELY VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

HÔTEL DES TROIS CHAPEAUX,
BOULOGNE.

MY DARLING,

I am writing this in the very hotel where you were only a few days ago. The thought tugs a little at my heart—but still I am glad.

I found on arriving this morning that I was not expected till to-morrow, so as they are rather pressed for room I am staying here to-night. Eric, dear, how one realises the war from the moment one sets foot in this country.

How unreal it all is—these sordid streets where one meets a well-known face at every corner as one used to in Bond Street. Soldiers and nurses everywhere.

To-day they brought Lord Roberts's coffin from G.H.Q. here. It was a terribly sad sight, and yet more impressive than the pageantry of

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a great public funeral at home. In place of pompous funereal trappings one felt there was real grief, the grief of subordinates for a great man who had loved and worked for the same cause that they love and work for each in their humble way. It was cold and rainy. Some of our troops paraded and a great many French. It was fine—weird and warlike. Just the essentials had been done—for nothing more was possible. The R.A.M.C. nurses had arranged a temporary resting-place on the platform with flowers, but the ceremony was simple and military. The coffin, draped with flags, was placed on the ordinary passenger boat which, escorted by a cruiser, vanished quickly into the fog. Over everything there was something shabby—cold—unsentimental, which I associate with war, but the very sordid desolation of the surroundings made it right—it was the funeral of a great soldier who died at war. I fancy it is what he would have liked.

I heard two Tommies in the crowd talking sadly about “Bobs.” I think he would have liked that too. I thought of how the French soldiers talked of their *petit caporal*.

In the evening I walked down to the station

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with Colonel Fairtown just as a train of wounded came in. I shall never forget it. Most of those who could walk (sitting-up cases, don't you call them?) were to spend the night at No. 13 Base. Eric, those poor men—not an inch of the cloth of their uniforms to be seen for mud—stumbling, helping each other through the puddles and slimy mud in the dark, patient and enduring, but weary—so very weary, I could not speak—their fatigue, their utter filth and dilapidation seemed sadder almost than their wounds. The colonel told me, though, that this train was an instance of the good work the R.A.M.C. do; all these men had been wounded only this morning, and they would sleep in hospital to-night; they had been fed three times, and each been given a change of shirt, et cetera. But still, I can't get the endless, straggling procession out of my head. Poor—poor, tired Tommies.

My dear, I have re-read this letter, and it does not seem as if it were I who had written it; even the few hours I have spent here make me feel like another Cicely. Dear, I am glad you are working for the wounded, glad that your work separates us, for you are what I love most in the world, and if I suffer at losing you I am suffering a little for

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them, and giving what I love most in the world. No gift could be big enough to give to such a cause.

Your loving CICELY.

PS.—Before I left I sent you out a parcel of shirts and things for your hospitals. I hope they will be of use.

In War Time

LETTER XXVII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

DEAR LITTLE GIRL,

So you are in this magnificently stricken country, and the shadow of war has fallen on you too. Don't you long to make the folks at home realise it?—and yet it seems impossible. The Frenchwomen are very splendid; they bear everything so cheerfully, and yet with such dignity. It seems to me, that though they work as usual—keep their houses as spotless as usual—are as tidy and trim in their appearance as usual, yet they never for one moment forget their man—husband, lover, brother or father who is far away in those infernal trenches. Some of our fellows are billeted in quite poor women's houses, and we most of us ask our hostesses to give us breakfast there—*café au lait* and rolls and butter, an appreciable item in a housewife's weekly budget—instead of the black coffee and dry bread at

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mess, and not one of these good women will accept one penny in return. Of course, all our boys are going to try and make up in presents; but that alters nothing of the kindliness of the action, and I feel it is all done in memory of their own mankind who are fighting far away.

The weather is perfectly awful, and we are still very busy here. I think I almost pity the sick the most; a wounded man feels he has done his bit, and knows he is something of a hero; but when a fellow has been sent down sick, he feels he has been a failure, he is horribly physically depressed, and jaundice, gastritis, or whatever it is, is not romantic. When your parcel comes I shall distribute some of the contents to the Sisters of Charity here. They have turned what is in peace time their asylum for the aged into a hospital, and they take all the infectious cases. They are very devoted, and I think their hospital is very poor. The cases of madness among the men are heartrending. I took one quite young fellow to Rouxville to-day; instead of getting into the car, he stood in the road muttering to himself, "Louis! Je veux voir Louis! où est Louis?" and after we had induced him to get in,

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the whole of the seventeen kilometres drive he kept on incessantly, "Louis! où est Louis! Je veux voir Louis." Another was so violent he had to be strapped to the stretcher, and, though he had two orderlies to look after him in the ambulance, he burst through the strong canvas straps as if they were paper. And then I read in an English paper to-night that Doctor Somebody or other has been advocating a gentle frame of mind towards the Huns—are people in England mad to receive such advice calmly?

Just as we got to the beginning of the tram lines, on our last journey to Rouxville this afternoon, one of the "sitters," a gastritis patient, seemed almost to lose his head (I must tell you that the said tram lines have a most exhilarating effect on the men, "Ça fait tant de plaisir de voir une ville après des mois et des mois," they say), and I found he was a native of Rouxville, and had been sent back from the front ill once before, and had actually passed through the town where his wife was without her even knowing he was there. He entreated us to go through the street where he lived, but it was impossible, as it was far from our route. However, I promised

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to go and see his wife and give her news of her husband; and as soon as we had finished our work we set out.

We found the street, and I knocked at the door, which was opened by a pretty little lady, who was frightened to death at the sight of our khaki. "I permit myself to visit you, madame, as I have just seen your husband."

"Enter, monsieur, enter. Monsieur will excuse the kitchen. I present you my mother—my sister, my youngest sister—my friend, the fiancé of my friend. Monsieur has seen Gaston—how is he?"

"Your husband, madame, sends you word that except for slight chill he is very well."

"Thank God, monsieur. When did you see him?"

"I have only just left him, madame."

"But where, monsieur?"

"I took him to the hospital."

Cicely, what an idiot I was. At the mention of the word "hospital" madame, her mother, her sister, her youngest (and shrillest) sister, and her friend, all went into simultaneous and violent hysterics, while the fiancé of the friend attempted

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to render inadequate first aid. (By the way, Nurse Vane, in case of hysterics, what would you do?) The peaceful kitchen became a pandemonium, and my stentorian shouts, "Your husband is well, your husband is well," could scarcely be heard.

At last in despair I forgot my manners; seized the lady of the house by the shoulders and shook her violently, and in five minutes we were all restored and cheered up wonderfully. Do they teach you to shake patients at the College of Ambulance in Vere Street? If not, they should, for after coffee and a *petit verre* had been produced for me, Madame dried her eyes, put on a very becoming black hat, and sallied forth with her mother, her sister—her youngest sister—her friend and her friend's fiancé, to try and effect an entrance into the station hospital. I hope they did, poor souls, and that Gaston caught a glimpse of his pretty little wife.

Let me have all your news, dear little war-shadowed Cicely.

It was a privilege to assist at the last journey of the great and beloved "Bobs."

Your ERIC.

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PS.—I went this evening to the operating room in the Ecole Normale to be inoculated by the doctor against typhoid, and the orderlies were so interested to know what the English wear under khaki that I had scarcely a rag left on me !

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LETTER XXVIII

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ANGLO-COLONIAL WOMEN'S HOSPITAL,
TARREAUX,
PAR BOULOGNE-SUR-MER.

DEAREST,

I have been here for three days and have quite shaken down. The work is menial work and hard, but I like it; I don't think I shall ever rest now when I am not doing something for our men. I already look forward with dread to the day when the V.A.D., whose place I have taken, returns, and I have to go home.

Often we see funeral processions of three, four, or many more, each coffin covered with the Union Jack. Our matron said to me to-day: "Even now I can't help blubbing when I lose one of my boys," and thank God! that is the attitude in our hospital. There is nothing official

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in the treatment of our boys, but something very affectionate, I think.

At least the war has brought us nearer our fellow creatures. To-day a Jewish patient here, who was recovering from pneumonia, was very anxious to see a rabbi and none could be found. I was told to try and get one, and I think I had a stroke of genius; I went to the priest at the Roman Catholic Church—an odd person to ask for such assistance. I found him in the sacristy; he had just finished saying mass. He was charming and put me on the right track at once. The rabbi asked before leaving the hospital if his name and address could be left in every hospital here, so a regimental chaplain (Church of England) promised to see it done. Isn't all that just as it ought to be, and very often has not been?

One of the patients has received a French military decoration. The darling is so proud of it he insists on wearing it on his pyjama coat (fate has given him a very broad and very gaudy striped suit), and whenever visitors come through the ward he raises himself in bed so that they can see it—bless him!

I am glad you are doing so much, my Eric,

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and though I do long for a sight of you, sometimes almost unendurably, still we are on the same soil and both working in different branches of the same task. Good night, my love. I am so sleepy I can scarcely see to write.

Your loving little CICELY.

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LETTER XXIX

ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

MY DARLING,

I can't get over the insensate cruelty to harmless little humble lives this war is causing every day. There was a man named Le C—— here, the brother of a woman who keeps a little café in the village. He possessed a little motor-car, and when the news came that the Germans were advancing to this village, he gave great help in clearing out the wounded; driving them into Rouxville in his car. He was at Rouxville when the news came that the Germans were just outside Harlay, and all his friends entreated him not to attempt another journey. However, there were still French wounded here, and he insisted on going back. The Rouxvillais covered his car with Red Cross badges and gave him a large Red Cross flag, but on the road over which we work every day he fell in with the Huns; they fired on

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him and he was killed on the spot—one hand was severed from his body as it grasped the steering-wheel. The Germans even wanted to take the body with them, but a peasant woman, who was working in the fields, declared she was his sister and brought him back in a cart here, where he was given decent burial. His little car—only a little tradesman's two-seater—is in the yard next to the barn where we keep our ambulances. It is absolutely riddled with bullets. Everywhere one hears these stories of useless, wanton murder, and there are still English people sitting in armchairs by the fire, comfortably, believing the Belgian atrocities are exaggerated.

I like to read the way you write of our men. My only regret is that we can't work for them, but I hope and believe they have all that is needed. Yesterday evening we were told to be prepared to be called up in the night to go up to the trenches, but we were not wanted after all.

Dearest, I have been thinking so much of you, but I am not going to unravel the tangle yet. I believe there is an answer to the riddle, but just now we will steep ourselves in work and get above all the peace-time troubles—shall we? At least,

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the war will have given us a respite. I kiss your hands, always beautiful, and now so useful.

Your devoted ERIC.

PS.—Have you seen a drawing of Forain's in a French newspaper—I think the *Journal*? Two men in the trenches, up to their knees in mud under the pouring rain. One says to the other, "There is only one thing that worries me—will they hold out?" The other answers "Who?" And the first one replies, "The civilians at home."

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LETTER XXX

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

DEAREST,

We lost one of our patients to-day—quite a boy. From this morning he was sinking fast, and we knew there was no hope. The sister asked him if there was any one—mother, sister or sweetheart—that he would like her to write to, but he always answered no—no—no. Then she told him he was very ill, that in a short time he might become worse, that he might lose consciousness at any moment. She asked him if there was anything he would like to say. He answered “yes,” and tried to raise himself in his bed. Then he just said, “I want to say—I die for King George.” An hour later he was dead.

I can scarcely write the story without crying. Have you ever heard anything greater in simplicity? I thank God that England can produce such men.

Your loving CICELY.

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LETTER XXXI

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

CICELY DEAREST,

Your story of "I die for King George" touched me more than I can say—and yet we know that that boy was only one of thousands. Has all this heroism been created by the war, or was it there all the time, I wonder? Doesn't it make you angry to read extravagant puffs in the newspaper of this person's war work, or that body's achievements in war time? As if any work could be mentioned in the same breath with that of the men who are fighting.

Do you remember I told you I had my "billet de logement" in the house of a Mademoiselle Durelle? She is a kind and charming hostess with the manners of a great lady. The old couple, Noel and Marie, who wait on her, are devoted to their mistress, and their two sons were educated by her—one is the village doctor, and the other

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a priest at a Rouxville seminary. When the Germans were on their road here the doctor's wife was expecting her confinement, and for a moment the little doctor hesitated about leaving the village, but his old peasant mother went to him and said, "Mon fieu, you, a doctor, have charge of souls as much as your brother the abbé, and Frenchmen can never abandon those under their care." He stayed, and for a fortnight had to care for over eighty wounded—both German and French—with no other medical assistance and only the help of the schoolmistress and the village women. He worked night and day, short of surgical instruments, short of drugs, short of everything except pluck and devotion; but I think he has never recovered from the strain. He looks almost like a wraith; his eyes are too bright, but he has extraordinary energy.

Mademoiselle Durelle also refused to leave Harlay, but left her own house and went to stay with her godson, the doctor, and only returned home after the barbarians had retired. I asked her if they had done any damage or stolen anything from her house, but she said no. Marie, the servant, chipped in with "Mademoiselle forgets the bottle of Benedictine we missed, and Mademoi-

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selle has never unlocked the *salon* since she returned."

Mademoiselle confessed that she had never dared to open the door of that apartment, and I suggested that now she was upheld by my reassuring presence (!) it would be a good moment to take the plunge. Candles were procured, and we went down the passage in solemn procession. Just as the sacred door was unlocked Mademoiselle laid her hand on my arm and said, "Monsieur, I scarcely dare to enter; the piano and all the music is in there—it would be too much to hope that they have not taken my Beethoven!" Let me hasten, for once, to clear the Teutons of suspicion. Cicely, the Beethoven was there, and Mademoiselle is consoled.

I have a new driver here now, as Halling has been sent elsewhere. The new chap, Harvey by name, is hardly more than a boy; he is not eligible for the army on account of his health; the very type of young Londoner we all know so well in peace time, very much occupied with having a good time, fond of pleasure, and thinking a good deal of his ties and socks and the last music-hall tune, and of little else. He is cheeky and rather amusing—you would never think he

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could have a serious thought; yet he has been driving in Flanders, where the convoys really do have something to face. They sleep in barns, and are often under shell fire, but they still remain the cheeky little "nuts" we know at home. Harvey told me to-day, quite seriously, he thought this war was getting beyond a joke!

Your parcel of shirts arrived, and I gave them to the nuns here. They have all the infectious cases in what is in peace time an asylum for the aged poor; they were so grateful, poor things. I think they have very little money, and receive very few gifts; so if you control any other parcels, sent them to me.

Your loving ERIC.

PS.—To-day I had a bath!!!

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LETTER XXXII

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

DEAREST,

I wish I knew your hostess, she must be a dear. I like to know that you are living in a woman's house—I have a feeling you will be looked after. Do you like being written to as if you were fifteen?

I begin to understand your irritation with the tone some of the Press take about the war. They never seem to get it right. Of course, dear, no one is doing any work worthy to be spoken of in the same breath with the men who are fighting, but still I suppose the public demands the sort of articles you dislike so much; and, after all, journalism is a trade, not a patriotic profession. I know, by my own experience, that it is impossible to get even the vaguest idea of what the war is at home. One is apt to fall into an exaggerated story-book sentimentality; and all I

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hear from our boys here is anything rather than sentimental. Did you ever know young Daverton? He is in the —th, and he arrived here last week. He is not seriously wounded, I am glad to say. It appears he was ordered to lead his men to an evacuated trench (I hope you understand, my knowledge of military terms is vague). He told me he started off in splendid style, taking cover, dropping down and then running like a hare across the plough; but just as he got to the trench he discovered that not one of his men was with him; they must have mistaken the way and gone to the right of him, and there he was alone, as he first thought, in a trench piled with dead Germans; but suddenly from under his nose rose up a living Hun. Daverton said he lost his head, and instead of drawing his revolver he went for the man and wrestled with him, getting his arms tight round the German's elbows. He remembers thinking all the time, "Everything depends on my grip—everything depends on my grip," when, to his horror, another German started up and ran to assist his friend. Daverton saw him lift his rifle, but instead of bringing down the butt-end, he clubbed the boy's head with his bayonet, inflicting a nasty wound in the forehead,

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but without stunning him. They were two Germans to one English boy, and Daverton, blinded with the blood that was pouring from his head, had just sense enough to drop like a stone and sham dead, expecting every moment to be finished off with the bayonet; but after a few minutes he cautiously opened one eye and found his aggressors had gone. He was lying on a heap of dead bodies piled so high that he did not dare to move, so he lay there on this ghastly decaying couch for nearly five hours. At last evening came, and he crept out and made for what he thought was an English trench, but when he got there he found it empty; he crawled along it, and suddenly up rose an immense Prussian guardsman. Daverton thought that this time his last hour had come, but to his intense surprise the Prussian threw up his hands and called out "Kamarade! Kamarade!" Then Daverton realised that, seeing an English officer, the Prussian thought that he was leading his regiment into the trench. With his heart in his mouth, wondering what he would get in for when the Prussian giant found he had only one rather undersized stripling to deal with, Daverton disarmed the man and took him prisoner. He says he gave

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him a good tot of rum, and the Prussian was quite friendly and gave him the sight off his rifle as a souvenir. Off they started for the nearest English trench—huge prisoner and diminutive conqueror. This time he made no mistake; but when they got to the trench and the English saw the Prussian guardsman, they prepared to fire, and Daverton, thinking his prisoner had led him to a German trench, threw up his hands and shouted “Kamarade! Kamarade!” However, by good fortune, the English did not fire, but Daverton was taken for a spy and in great danger. Luckily an officer recognised him, took charge of the prisoner, and sent Daverton down to the field dressing-station, where he discovered that, in addition to the scalp wound, he was shot in the arm and slightly wounded in the hand. He is such a nice boy, and loves to tell the story. He always finishes up with “How’s that for a lurid afternoon?” His description of the time they have had lately is awful, and he says quite simply: “I don’t think I’m a coward; you see, I’m not a clever chap, and I haven’t enough imagination to be afraid.” He left for home to-day on the *St. David*, like a boy going home for a short holiday. What babies men

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are, and what darlings ! Both of these epithets apply to you !

Your own

CICELY.

PS.—Dear, I must tell you how ashamed I feel when I look back on the days when we first met. I am not ashamed of what I did, but I am ashamed of what I was. There is only one phrase that describes me—a selfish, worthless minx, and you never thought me that, or perhaps you did and only treated me as you did because you are gentle and good, and—well, because you are you. After all, how could you really take me seriously ? I should have no right to complain if you only admired my looks, and if I was only just an amusing interlude in your life. Write me the truth, dear ; but please, please love me really ; for, minx or no minx, I love you with all my heart and soul. Since I have been in France I know I have a soul.

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LETTER XXXIII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

I wonder if I ought to begin this letter "Dearest Minx," Cicely mine? No, dear, seriously, from the first day I knew you, my love for you has been growing every day, every hour. I can't tell you when I was conscious that admiration and attraction had been merged into love, but whether I knew it or not I see now I always loved you. Dearest girl, when we met we were both in that parlous humour that attacks all idle people at home in war time. But you were you, and I trust you and love you. Here in this muddy village I seem to see everything more clearly. There seems to be a higher test of everything. I can't express it, and I seem to be nearer to the great life-principle of the world. I hope I see as the humblest soldiers seem to see it—though I shall never deserve the knowledge as they have deserved it.

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To-day, as we were working, we passed a large convoy of German prisoners. They seemed well fed, but I thought them thinly clad. A little "Meridional," who was in my car, nearly fell out of it with excitement; he called them every name in his extensive vocabulary. I may mention that the Germans could not hear him, so it was purely a relief to his own feelings. The French soldiers hate the Boches down in their hearts; you see, there are still many French who remember 1870, and they know the delightful race the Kaiser so wonderfully typifies. The priests, who are serving with the colours, make splendid soldiers. There is an abbé who is secretary to our *medecin-en-chef* here. I only found out to-day that he was an abbé, as, of course, he is in uniform like any other "poilu." I have often talked to him for a long time when I have been waiting in the chef's bureau for orders, and I blush to remember some of my conversation, which is not as a rule adapted for clerical ears. I almost thought of apologising, but he is a splendid little chap, and so I shall leave it at that. We pass large convoys of ammunition and artillery on the roads every day now, and we hear the guns much oftener. We are twelve

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kilometres from the trenches, and the fire-balls (flares, I think they are called) look most impressive at night, and when the wind is towards us we can even hear the crack of the rifles.

Harvey told me that when he was driving an ambulance in Flanders, before he came to us, on the way to Ypres one day he met a girl of about eighteen by the roadside. She was an inhabitant of Ypres, and she entreated him to give her a lift, as she wanted to look for her mother, who had declined to leave their home there. When they got to the town she showed him the way to the street where she lived, but not one house was distinguishable in the heap of ruins; the wretched girl burst into tears, but asked to be taken round to the back of the ruins on the chance of finding some vestige of the house. Harvey drove round, and in the ruins they discovered one room still standing. The girl flung open the door, and there beside a fire was an old woman sitting knitting. The two fell into each other's arms and sobbed. Harvey offered to take the mother back, but she refused. She said she still had her own kitchen, and she could still procure food, and so no Boche artillery was going to turn her off her own property. She insisted on opening a

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bottle of wine for Harvey, and went down to the cellar to fetch it. Suddenly they heard a loud shriek; her daughter followed her—more shrieks. Harvey, fearing some awful catastrophe, tore down the steps, and there beheld the two women apparently soaked in blood to their knees, and hysterical—but with laughter! It turned out that the constant shock of the bombardment had broken nearly all the bottles in the cellar, and the place was knee deep in wine. However, a bottle was found, healths were drunk, and Harvey drove off, leaving the old lady still a prey to uncontrollable laughter as she waved good-bye. He says the cheerfulness of these poor people must be seen to be believed. He used to go and dine in the convent at St. Eville, where some other Red Cross drivers were quartered; there is not a window left in the convent, as the place is shelled all the time. The nuns used to wait on them at dinner, and one evening a little Sister came in wearing one of their khaki caps on her head. She was overcome with remorse afterwards, for what she considered a grave fault, but said she could not resist such an exquisite joke. Poor simple little soul!

Dear, I think this will reach you about Christ-

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mas Day, so take all my love and every wish I
can send you.

Your loving ERIC.

PS.—Another order to be ready to go right to
the front at midnight—again countermanded.

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LETTER XXXIV

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

DEAREST,

I suppose I never really doubted that you love me seriously; but oh, my love, I so longed to hear you tell me so once again. I say "hear," for when I get your letters I can hear your voice. Miss Belgrave, one of the nurses, has just returned from working on one of the trains. The other day she had two German wounded and an English officer all lying close to each other; the Englishman was pretty badly hurt. When she went on her rounds one of the Germans plucked at her skirt and, pointing to the opposite berths, eagerly asked her for news of the patients. She thought he was asking about his countryman, but he said, "No; tell me of the English officer—where is he wounded—is it serious—does he suffer?" She answered him, and went on to her other patients. On her

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second round, the same questions, "Does the English officer suffer much—will he recover?" She asked the man if he knew the officer, but he just said "No," and would give no reason for his curiosity. On their arrival at Boulogne the German whispered to Nurse Belgrave, "Have I been good, Sister?" She told him "Yes." "Then do me a favour; see that the English officer's stretcher is carried out before mine." She humoured him, and as the Englishman was carried from the train the German raised himself on his stretcher and with his left hand (his right was wounded) gravely saluted. The Nurse then determined to find out the reason. At first he said he knew the Englishman's face, but after some time he drew her down and whispered in her ear, "I saw that officer on the field of battle. Sister, it was I who shot him!"

Dear, I send you every Christmas wish, and I shall pray for your happiness that Christmas night; though, indeed, I do so every night. We are having an entertainment for our boys, and all the treats we can possibly give them.

Your own MINX.

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LETTER XXXV

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

XMAS EVE.

DEAREST LITTLE MINX,

When I got back from working, to Rouxville, at 6.30 to-night, I was told to go instantly to the Chief. I found him in a state of bewilderment—real or assumed. A party of English had arrived in an ambulance; the Chief wished me to see them, and I could not get anything out of him, except that he feared he had made a mistake in certain questions he had asked them. I was to go and interview them at the grocer's over the way. I obeyed, and went through the shop and up the narrow stairs, knocked at the door of the room where the "épiciier" had lod'ged his guests. Cicely, there came into the dark passage a tall figure, and I give you my word of honour, I did

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not know for some minutes whether I was talking to a woman or a man.

To begin with, she, or he, was dressed exactly as we were : British warm, Bedford cords, puttees, and a woollen helmet. At last I realised that I was speaking to a woman, but after so long in the heart of the French provinces it was really a shock. This lady and two others (who are also dressed in khaki, but khaki skirts), have come here to offer their services and their splendid ambulance, driven by their own chauffeur ; but, owing to some mistake, their arrival was not announced by any of the Red Cross societies, and, although their passports, et cetera, are quite in order, they have no papers ordering them to come here, which I am afraid may get them into difficulties.

I find that the question the Chief asked them when he was arranging for their being billeted here to-night, was, Were they brother and sister or husband and wife ?

I suppose in certain work it is necessary for women to wear male attire, but it is certainly a pity here, as French people simply cannot understand it, and think they must be adventures. It was a very awkward moment when

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I had to take the party down to mess ; the convoy were civil, of course, but obviously thought they were " des suffragettes ou des folles."

After dinner I explained to the Chief that the new arrivals had already worked in Belgium ; that in a sporting country like England " des femmes tres bien " wore costumes almost identical with the one that surprised him so much, and I think I have persuaded him to give them work in the hospitals here, if their credentials arrive. The difficulty is, that they are not trained nurses ; but I have persuaded him that they are ladies, and very kind and anxious to help. He admits that Englishwomen are very clean and very dependable in the wards, and so I think they will stay ; but oh, Cicely, I can't help feeling that in war time women had better stay at home, except those who are properly qualified to nurse in hospitals, however excellent their intentions may be.

However, the party is housed for to-night at least—two at the grocer's and one in the hospital at the Ecole Moderne.

I went to midnight Mass to-night. The whole scene was most impressive ; the stream of women dressed in black, hurrying silently from the

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little dark village streets into the open space in front of the church; the church itself packed to overflowing with soldiers; the glimmering lights; the organ music, and, over and above it all, the booming of the guns. So many of the women were crying quietly as they knelt—poor souls!

It is just Christmas Day as I write, so a happy Christmas to you, my little love.

From

YOUR ERIC.

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LETTER XXXVI

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

DEAREST,

Isn't it a fact that, in all wars, a mania among women for wearing male attire has made its appearance. I know it was a common occurrence in the Vendean war. I wonder why? Of course, there are isolated cases where it is necessary. I gather from her photos that Lady Dorothy Feilding wears something of the kind, but then I believe that she has been working right up to the Belgian trenches and in places where skirts were out of the question. A very tall, handsome woman who, I am told, was in the French army as a man for some time, was pointed out to me the other day in the street at Boulogne. She was mentioned in the English papers in the early days of the war. I believe she served some weeks as a chauffeur to an aviator, but several men in the regiment knew who she was.

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I am told that she is French and married to an Englishman. She does not present at all a masculine appearance as far as her face goes. She was wearing a long coat, so I could not judge of her figure. After all, in these days of fancy dress fashions I don't see why men should have such a prejudice against our sex donning the "breeks"; it is only a question of convention, after all. Trousers are not more indiscreet in their revelations than the hobble skirts of two years ago.

We are not so busy as we were. I thank Heaven for the reason—but I resent idleness.

I sent you a large bundle of picture papers a few days ago which I hope you will like, as I don't suppose you get them where you are. When I have to leave here I shall go to Paris and see if I can get something to do there. I can't face London again. Dear, my thoughts are with you always. Even in your work you won't forget me, will you?

Your loving

CICELY.

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LETTER XXXVII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

MINX MINE,

We distributed a little "surprise" on Xmas Eve to the men—cigarettes, chocolate, oranges and *pain d'épice*—a very humble little treat but received with gratitude far beyond its merits. Did I tell you André Charlot gave me 8000 cigarettes to take out to his countrymen. They are all English cigarettes and the French Tommies like French tobacco best, but they were so amused by the fact that the cigarettes had come from London that they even begged for some of the boxes as souvenirs. As we went round the barn it was touching to see the dirty hands stretched out from the straw, and then here and there a figure that did not move, but lay with eyes closed, suffering and ill. One of the patients said, "Eh bien, tout de même on a eu un chic reveillon."

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A "chic reveillon" ! A cigarette—an orange and a bit of gingerbread. But with French cheerfulness they called it a "chic reveillon" and with French grace they received it as if it had been *foie gras* and champagne.

I told you in my last letter that I thought the "khaki ladies" were going to stay, but the fates have decided otherwise. I received a message this morning that, until I had seen the Chief, les Anglaises were not to be allowed to go near a "wounded."

Cicely, what do you think had happened?

It appears that one of the women who nurse at the hospital where one of the English ladies was billeted just happened by chance to glance into the new comer's kit bag. (Dear, don't you see a woman "just happening by chance" to look into another woman's luggage?) And what do you think she found? A razor !!! The hospital authorities were thunderstruck—and lurid visions of spies dressed up as women were rife. I was really anxious when I saw the effect created, for out here the French have had only too much experience of spying, and they are not inclined to be as amiable towards these gentry as we are in England, at any rate. "What did

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a woman want a razor for? I really didn't know. Would I answer for my countrywoman? I could not do that, as, though I was convinced in my own mind that all this suspicion was groundless—still, I did not know the ladies, but I said all I could. Then I was taken to see the Commandant de la Place and again asked in passionate accents what use a woman could have for a razor. I am afraid I suggested a flippant reason not unconnected with chiropody, which did not "go" well, but, however, at last it was decided that I was to tell "*les dames Anglaises*" that no women could be allowed in the war zone and that they must depart. A pleasant task! I got through it as tactfully as I could, but I disliked having to do it. Of course, I was not allowed to mention the suspicions that the razors had excited, but I think the ladies guessed that something was wrong. I was very sorry for them. They are ladies and very kind and generous, I think.

I hasten to tell you that two days after we had proof from London that the suspicion of their honesty was absolutely unfounded. The blame rests purely with whoever was responsible for having sent them here without better credentials.

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Still, the costume was to blame. You say men are unreasonable and that costume is only a convention—but you must remember that the French are accustomed to the war attitude of their own women, which is certainly a very dignified one. I hate to make comparisons, but I don't think that English civilians are remarkable for dignity just now. The two countries seem to have exchanged national characteristics.

Thank you for the picture papers. We all enjoyed them—by the way, some of the portraits of the young gentlemen of the stage in heroic poses are a little difficult to explain away in France. They look so terribly strong and well and fit to fight ! Still, I suppose they are bravely concealing the ravage of different mortal diseases—it is wonderful under these circumstances they can smile so sweetly at the camera.

Dear, you are always in my thoughts. It seems centuries since we parted. When shall we meet again and how?

Your ERIC.

The French artillery are very busy. There is an almost incessant booming of guns—one can hear the 75s quite distinctly.

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LETTER XXXVIII

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

ERIC DEAREST,

I hated to read what you wrote me about explaining away the "matinée idols." It is so—so upsetting that there should be anything about England to be explained in France. At home one is inclined to be more lenient. I suppose when one is idle oneself one has to "stand in" with people who, after all, are only idle too.

By the way, I believe that most of the London managers refuse to engage any chorus men who are eligible for the army.

Do you really mean that Englishwomen's war attitude is not as dignified as that of French women? I hope not. If you saw the nurses work here you would be proud, I think. Yesterday some of us were allowed to go on the trial trip

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of one of the hospital trains, presented by Lady Michelham (a rather splendid gift, don't you think? and from an Englishwoman, my dear!) It cost, I believe, well over £1200 and it is wonderfully installed. There is through communication from one end to the other—there is an operating room—a store room—a kitchen; all splendidly done—also a bath room which is an immense boon for the nurses and staff of the train. We went to Le Touquet and to the Duchess of Westminster's hospital there. It seems admirably run in the Casino, which is very well adapted for the purpose; but though the great gambling room with its florid stucco decorations makes a splendid ward, still it looks very incongruous. The staff are lodged at a neighbouring hotel, and I should think very comfortably. The nurses tell me the Duchess is invaluable—practical and useful. She looks charming too. (Another Englishwoman!) Out of the train I saw Francis de Croisset, who is on the Belgian staff. He was stunned by the explosion of a shell the other day—but not hurt. Dear, my time is nearly up here. I shall go to Paris, I think, and try to get work there. I long for a sight of you, only just to hold your hand and look in your eyes for a

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moment. Are you likely to get any leave, do you think?

Your loving CICELY.

PS. Answer my question about the war attitude of Englishwomen and Frenchwomen, won't you?

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LETTER XXXIX

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO NURSE VANE

DEAREST,

I don't know if I love you best when you are in an angelic mood or when you are a little—I had almost written perverse—of course, I meant feminine. Dear, of course I admire the splendid things that women have done, but they have been done by splendid women; no one can speak highly enough of the women who have organized and nursed and been admirable in self-sacrifice and devotion, but there are certain things about Englishwomen that I don't understand—so much about Frenchwomen that I do. No French paper has fashion articles—no English paper is without them; no Frenchwoman in Paris goes out in gala dress—to the male eye the audiences in English theatres are as gaily dressed as before the war. I know all about “business as usual,” but also I

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know that England has been warned that the strictest economy should be practised by every individual subject. In France, women seem to be living and working quietly—in England there seems to my obtuse male brain a certain amount of pleasurable excitement, almost hysteria, about even war work. Do you remember the “War Baby” scare. I received at that time a copy of a feminist newspaper announcing that the body controlling the paper was going to undertake the care and education of all the war babies and that consequently fresh subscriptions to the paper would be money paid to the national cause. The next week it was discovered that there were no “war babies” to speak of! And side by side with this I remember that for years infant mortality in the poorer districts of London has been appalling, owing in great part to the mothers’ ignorance of the ordinary hygiene and the simplest methods of rearing children. Surely the remedy for that is woman’s work—but of course such a cause would not have made such a sensational special number. Frenchwomen seem to me to be self-effacing now—not gloomy or despondent, but conscious ever of the ghastly struggle their

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menkind are engaged in. I don't think that any casual observer would receive that impression of Englishwomen either by an inspection of restaurants in the West or picture palaces and public houses in the East End of London. But again I say that there are thousands of Englishwomen whose efforts have been admirable.

There is a chap in a very bad way in the main hospital here. His mother has come to him and she sits by his bedside all day—trim and neat and comely, and always with a smiling face she tells you how much better her son is. To-day I passed through the ward and the boy was sleeping. Her face was turned towards the door—it was the face of an old, despairing, haggard woman, with tears slowly coursing over her cheeks—every muscle relaxed. She looked a dying woman. While I was there the boy moved and woke up—in an instant the tears had disappeared and she was again the calm, hopeful woman. Poor, poor mother! Oh, the pity of these humble, harmless lives wrecked and smashed.

Michel Lenoir, a Breton, the only Red Cross orderly here, who is adored by all the patients, showed me a letter written to one of the wounded

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by his peasant wife—the husband was just twenty-two. She wrote to him that the brown cow was giving lots of milk, that she had some difficulty in getting their little boy a pair of boots—but that her father had sent her five francs and so she had managed; that her grandfather had had rheumatism but was better, that she was glad to know that her husband was well cared for, and sent him the best wishes for his health from his affectionate wife—a little, laboriously written formal letter—and then a postscript scrawled underneath.

“ C’est l’instant où je suis seule avec toi—avec toi—avec toi—mon cheri—mon cheri.” (This is my moment with you, with you, my darling—my darling).

The poor little letter arrived three hours after the boy was dead.

Dear, can any punishment be sufficient for the nation responsible for this war. These poor, mutely suffering, humble, innocent folk.

Yours,

ERIC.

PS. I did not know that the London theatrical

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managers refuse engagements to chorus men eligible for the army—but if it is true why don't they apply the same rules to the principals? They certainly don't do that, as the "juvenile gentleman" still flourishes.

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LETTER XL

FROM NURSE VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

MY DEAREST,

I won't discuss with you—you take just the calm judicial line that is enough to make any woman perverse ! (of course you will make capital out of that remark in your next letter). No one is ever convinced in argument. I know that I can only do one of two things when we disagree—give in or manage you; and I cannot do the latter from a distance; besides, the end of your letter showed such a tender, gentle side of you that I can only love you and disagree in silence; so we'll let it go at that—shall we?

Alas! my time here will be up in a few days. I never thought I should be miserable at giving up emptying slops, cleaning out rooms and doing housemaid's work, but I am—quite miserable.

My American friend, Monica Erroll, is going to inspect some of the hospitals in France on behalf of

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an American society. She goes through Boulogne to Rouen and Paris next week and offers to pick me up in her car, and I have accepted. I shall see if I can't get something to do in Paris. I do want to go on working, and I can't face going back to England and all it means to me. Dear, the war has taught me that only big things matter. I know that is true, but I want to be sure that I can live up to it. I have made so many mistakes in my life and I don't want to make any more. I want to have a few days to think, to correct my standards. I want to do the right thing for once—what is right for you, for myself—for him.

Your loving CICELY.

PS. As I re-read this letter it seems as if I were trying to quarrel with you. Dear, it is not so. I wouldn't have one iota of you changed. Don't scold me when you answer this, don't be too nice to me either; just write me a letter that sends me a breath of your dear self. I love your vitality and your spirits. I get mine from you. I want you so much. I should like to put my head on your shoulder and just have a good "howl."

Write to me to Hôtel Antoine, Paris.

From CICELY.

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LETTER XLI

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO MRS. VANE

MINX MINE,

Can't you just manage me at a distance?—that's all! Dear, I am sorry if I wrote tactlessly to you—or was it that my letter came at the wrong moment? Dear little Cicely, when will you learn that I don't idealise you. I love you as you are—and I think I have come to know you better since we have been parted. I, too, think of you and all you represent ceaselessly. I could never love a faultless woman. I should never understand her, but I do love a woman who has the virtues of her faults. I like everyone to be human—that is one of the reasons I love the French soldiers—there is no nonsense about them, they are just themselves with heroism added.

There is in this village of a thousand inhabitants

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one lady who—one lady that—well, a lady who is highly disapproved of by all our kind hostesses, who never see her when she walks out, and only mention her name with raised eyebrows and uplifted hands. “Oui, Monsieur, elle à toujours eu une conduite déplorable et patati et patata.” She wears a red knitted coat (she is what is called a fine figure of a woman), high heels, and her rather large eyes are boldly but carefully painted. She lives opposite the Ambulance 64/65, and when we work there in the morning she makes no effort to disguise her admiration of my drivers. I think the eldest Yorkshire lad and Harvey are her favourites. The “poilus” do not share the attitude adopted by the matrons of Harlay.

To-day we were loading up the ambulance at the door of the main hospital: we had some pretty bad cases and the stretchers needed handling carefully.

Suddenly I became aware of a movement among the hospital stretcher bearers—a general smile and a wink or two. I looked up and there I beheld the Lady of the Painted Eyes, sauntering down the street.

The orderlies were immensely struck with her appearance, but she strolled along as haughty

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as any Gaiety girl. "Sapristi ! c'est une belle fille." "Mais oui, j'te crois." "Elle en à une taille, mon vieux."

I was really annoyed for the moment to think that the lady could distract their thoughts from their suffering human burdens, and I was on the point of saying so when I saw first one of the wounded raise himself on his arm, look at the lady and grin, another with his head enveloped in bandages winked, and a third, a really badly wounded man, managed to wave his hand—about the only part of him that was not wounded. The lady saw—dropped her haughty manner, kissed her hand, called out "Bonne chance, mes amis" cheerily, if a little raucously—smiled her sweetest smile and passed royally down the street. The wounded winked at the bearers, murmured, "C'est vrai, c'est une belle fille," and settled themselves back on their stretchers, immensely amused and cheered by the sight of the lady !

Your ERIC.

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LETTER XLII

FROM MRS. VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

HÔTEL DU PAYS,
ROUEN.

DEAREST,

We got here last night after an icy drive in a white fog. Monica is a dear, but it seems so odd to be travelling with a woman in a real motor coat and a veil. I feel like a lady's maid in my blue ulster and shapeless hat—but I am glad and proud to be wearing it.

How unreal it seems to be motoring on a French road and to be constantly stopped by a barricade made of trunks of trees or piled-up wagons.

It is Sunday, and Rouen is a wonderful sight: the cathedral square thronged with people, English khaki troops, French troops and a few Belgians. Staff officers, black men in khaki, Senegalese Turcos. They look like a stage crowd.

A Belgian officer who is at our hotel told me

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what he says is the true story of Aerschot. It appears that when the Germans arrived at that Belgian village, the bourguemestre and his wife were standing at the door of their house and three German officers came up to them. The bourguemestre had to give up the place into their hands and for once these gentry were quite civil.

One remained talking to the mayor and his wife, the other two went into the house. The mayor's son, who was upstairs, suddenly heard a scream. He ran down and saw his sister, a girl of eighteen, struggling in the arms of the Huns. He drew his revolver and shot one of the brutes dead, but the other overpowered him.

Then and there the boy and his father were stood up against the wall of the house and shot, under the eyes of the two wretched women.

The Germans then rounded up all the men in the place and marched them out of Aerschot; the women were driven into the church and locked in. At six the soldiers opened the church door and threw in some mattresses, and the wretched captives thought that this was a proof that their conquerors were not altogether heartless; but at seven o'clock the door was unlocked and fifty

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German soldiers were let into the church, at half-past seven another fifty took their places, and so on all through the night, regularly, at every half hour. In the morning they put a machine gun at the door of the church and murdered those unhappy raving women.

Can horror go any further? I turn sick and cold when I think of it.

Your loving CICELY.

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LETTER XLIII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO MRS. VANE

CICELY, DEAR,

So you are back in Paris—Paris that I know and love so well; I wonder if I should recognise it again now.

We have had quite an exciting time here to-day. I must tell you that the mayor of this place is a prisoner in Germany, and the "adjoint" is supposed to be mayor; but most of the office business seems to be run by Madame Henri, the clerk's wife, a bustling and determined grey-haired lady. I had to go to the mairie this afternoon on some interminable business connected with our "permis de séjour." When I arrived I found Madame Henri, the clerk's wife, engaged in a heated discussion with an individual attired in decent black, brown boots and a sombrero—a little like Hall Caine in appearance. It

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appeared he wanted a pass to leave the village the next morning in the direction of the lines (no civilians are allowed past the sentries without one). Madame Henri declined to give it to him, as the rule is that passes can only be issued on the day they are to be used. The gentleman protested, Madame Henri replied; the gentleman protested louder, Madame Henri replied very much louder indeed; the gentleman made some remarks about the absurdity of women having official power (what would you have said, my dear?), Madame Henri replied that one woman, at any rate, had the power, and would certainly use it to rid herself of distasteful society; the gentleman (or the no gentleman) muttered something about an old meddler. Madame Henri, with admirable decision, advanced from behind the official desk, faced her opponent and began to talk; the gentleman began to retreat. When Madame had got him near the door she took him by the shoulders, turned him outside, and slammed the door in his face. The populace, represented by three dirty children and myself, cheered lustily, and Madame returned to her desk and resumed her work; and there the matter would have ended had it not been that the mayor, who, I think, is

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undergoing a kind of rest cure in the back of the mairie, was disturbed by the noise, and came to find out what it was all about. The three dirty children and I were awed into silence, but Madame, who was beginning to feel she had had enough trouble with male creatures for the day, related the story ceremoniously, but with rather terrifying distinctness. The mayor protested, Madame shrugged; finally the mayor insisted that the stranger should be recalled, and apologised to by Madame. Madame shrugged defiantly (she has most expressive shoulders), and one of the children was sent to fetch the stranger. The mayor again began to talk of apologies; Madame laughed loudly and far more than naturally. I was beginning to look forward to the coming interview, when the messenger returned. The stranger was not to be found; he had just left the village by the road leading towards the lines! Tableau and triumph of feminism! Madame seized the reins of government, conducted three cross-examinations at the same time, cowed the populace, interviewed a sentry and elicited the fact that the stranger, who had been claiming a pass for the next morning in the name of

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Darien, had just left the village showing a pass for that afternoon made out in the name of Carrier. The fields were scoured, the roads patrolled by Madame's scouts, but all in vain; the spy, for spy he undoubtedly was, had vanished. I don't think the mayor will make any headway with his rest cure for the next few days. You see, Cicely, a woman is always right in the end.

The French convoy have gone to Paris on leave, and we are doing all the work here, which is gradually growing less. There are far fewer wounded; our patients are chiefly sick men—cases of frozen feet, gastritis, pneumonia, et cetera.

To-day we had a larger number than usual, and I realised, alas! that there were more sick than we could evacuate in the afternoon, as we have to be back in the village by seven. They had mostly only arrived this morning, but were longing to be in bed. Some of them caught hold of my coat as I passed, entreating to be taken first. It was pitiful!

Dear, I have been reading through some of your first letters to me. I tried to carry them

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in my breast-pocket, but my appearance was becoming so Amazonian that I have had to lock them in my bag. When I read them I smile often, but so very tenderly. How long will it be before I see you again, I wonder?

Your loving ERIC.

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LETTER XLIV

FROM MRS. VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

HÔTEL ANTOINE,
PARIS.

ERIC MINE,

It seems so odd to be living a civilised life again—odd and rather wrong. Paris is very much changed, though I believe it is a whirl of life compared to what it was two months ago. The Champs Elysées, with so many windows shuttered, remind me of a laughing young face that has been suddenly stricken blind. People who left for Bordeaux with the Government are beginning to return; those who stayed call the fugitives “Les tournedos Bordelais!”

Dear, during these few days of idleness I have been thinking very seriously, and I have made up my mind.

Eric, I belong to you utterly and entirely. If you were to leave me, or if you were to die

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to-morrow, it would make no difference—I am yours until the day of my death. You are the one thing that matters in my life—your love the one thing I want to live for, and so, dear, I have resolved to free myself. I don't want to be cruel—at least, not more than I must necessarily be. I want to spare the man who has done everything for me every pang I can, but I must be free. I see now what I have been. I see now what I will never be again. But, my Eric, remember that I do this of my own free will. I have only myself to thank if your love for me is only a fancy that will pass, and I shall never reproach you if it is so. I don't want you to feel that what I am going to do binds you to me in any way. I don't want you to be tied to me by anything but love. I have known women who kept men by a "tie of honour," and I know where that leads. I want the best of you, and the best can only be what is freely given.

One thing more, dearest. I think I have a right to take back my freedom; but I have no right to hurt or give unnecessary pain to a man from whom I have received nothing but devotion and kindness. If I tell him that someone else has come into my life it will hurt him more, for he

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is of a naturally jealous disposition, and he has always trusted me—I blush to write that now. Even if the end of the war comes sooner than we expect, and you come home, we must not meet for some time; secret meetings would only end in discovery, and I want to spare him that; it is the least I can do.

Will you consent to my plan? I have never loved you so well as now that I am risking losing you, for that I know I do.

Besides, dear, there must be great changes in my life; I mean to begin all over again. I shall go to London soon and try to take up nursing seriously, and, if I don't succeed, after the war is over I must learn some other profession. I am determined to earn my own living. I don't want to be useless. I know now that the useless don't count any more. When I think how short a time it is since we were all talking of "Art" with a very big "A"; of how every one considered him or herself an artist, or at least a critic of art; of how we "talked clever" about music, literature, modern art—we were even passionately serious over ballet-dancing and the theatre! As if any of these things really mattered, since they have not stood the test of war!

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They were all just peace-time luxuries. To-day I heard a discussion between some English people as to whether a great artist should not be exempt from the duty of fighting for his country, and I say no—no—no ! If there is any soul in his art, his soul would lead him to his country's aid ; and if his art was soulless, then of what more account is he than any other man ?

Dear, you who have understood me from the first, understand me now.

You will, won't you, my dear love ?

Your CICELY.

PS.—Since you have kept my letters, will you send me them ? I have all yours, and I want to read our story over. You shall have them back if you want them. Do you ?

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LETTER XLV

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO MRS. VANE

How can I answer you, my darling, except that I trust you, I understand you and I admire you? It shall be as you wish. I will wait till you send for me, and when the day comes—dear, you have found your solution, and I have found mine; it lies before me as clear as day. only it entails my asking you something more—the greatest favour of all. Cicely, I want you to give me your life, so that when the time comes you can belong to me before everyone. Will you trust me and give me yourself? I know you know my love, and I know the value of what I ask in all devotion and humility. I ask you to marry me. Answer me when you like, but answer yes.

Yours devotedly,

ERIC.

PS.—Of course you shall have the letters, but remember they are only lent. Where shall I send them? I ask as I don't know how long you stay in Paris.

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LETTER XLVI

FROM MRS. VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

HÔTEL ANTOINE,
PARIS.

MY DEAR LOVER,

When we meet I shall have something to say to you, thankfully, humbly, and very lovingly. (Can you guess what it is, because I forbid you to?) Dear, I can't write what your letter has made me feel—I couldn't even speak it, but if you were here I could make you understand; and then—and then—I want to hear you ask me again. Am I a coquette and very silly? Forgive me, love, for I am wildly happy. I won't write any more nonsense.

We went over the American Ambulance at Neuilly, which is perfectly wonderful. It must cost I don't know what fabulous sum to run; there is a marvellous dental room, and every product of modern medical science is to be found there.

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There is a kind of double staff—the regular nurses (among them Miss Vera Arkwright) and in addition a great number of the American colony in Paris wait upon the patients—serve them their meals and so on. They also wear nurses' uniform, and it is a curious sight about six o'clock to see these white and blue cotton-clad nurses being enveloped in magnificent and fashionable sable cloaks, stepping into their smart limousines. It reminds one a little of the stage door of a theatre, where there is an "all star" cast. There is a French sergeant at Neuilly, who, though he was wounded twice, continued to lead his men till a third shot brought him to the ground. He is a magnificent man, but I fear very badly wounded. His cross is on the table by his bed, and he asked the nurse to lay it on his breast, to show an English general who was inspecting the hospital. The general saluted him as he saw it.

We went also to the Trianon Palace Hotel hospital at Versailles. The last time I was there was in June, when I dined with a jolly party in the gallery of the restaurant, which is now one of the wards. At the very spot where our dinner-table stood then, there was a screened-off bed to-day.

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Dearest, you are to write me sensible letters again—not love-letters; at least, not altogether love-letters—or you won't have anything left to tell me when we do meet again.

In very truth your

CICELY.

PS.—You say your French convoy had leave. Is there any chance of your getting a day and coming here? I so long to see you soon, and over here it would not be dangerous.

In War Time

LETTER XLVII

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO MRS. VANE

LOVE OF MINE,

I will obey you implicitly. I wont write you how happy your letter has made me—nor how I adore you—nor that I understand. I won't even write "I love you—I love you—I love you."

We are having much less work here now. We were telephoned for to go to Orbeil, six miles from here. It used to be a fortified town under Louis XIII, and the old town gate and part of the old walls are still standing. Next to the gate there is a gloomy hall in the thickness of the wall, which is used as the local theatre. This is now a temporary hospital; the stalls are used for the sitting-up cases, and the rest of the space covered with straw. It is like our barn (which has lately been closed, as we receive far fewer wounded now). The place is only dimly lit, and

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on the stage the tawdry, dirty scene of a drawing-room is still set, with its dingy pink-and-gold walls and impossible theatrical vases of flowers.

Yesterday I got up as near to the trenches as I am ever likely to get ; I went to get our supply of petrol from the train at an even muddier village than ours, where the only big house in the place was burnt out by the enemy for no particular reason. We could see the wood which is actually occupied by the Kaiser's troops.

There is an American convoy who are doing splendid work from Rouxville ; they are luckier than we, and seem to go everywhere.

Dearest, I don't think I have any chance of leave for a long time yet. Just now we are a driver short ; two nights ago a car was sent for to go to a farm a little distance off to fetch a scarlet fever case among the troops, and the youngest Yorkshire lad, who was going to drive it, in the dark poured petrol into his lamp instead of water, and burnt himself pretty badly, so he has gone home for a little.

We are much more comfortable now, as we have taken a room to sit in and got a woman to cook for us ; but the room is small for six, and

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the time when we are not working hangs heavily on our hands.

I suppose I am not to write you that I think of you till I ache for a sight of your face. Should I be disobeying orders if I put a row of crosses for kisses at the end of this letter, as we used to do when we were children?

Your loving

ERIC.

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LETTER XLVIII

FROM MRS. VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

PARIS.

DEAR LOVE,

We are leaving here in two days, so write to Robinson's Hotel and send the packet of letters there. Every woman is working at hospitals here—Madame Edwards, Germaine Porel (Réjane's daughter), Colette Willy, and many others are all nursing. I am beginning to see what you mean about the dignity of Frenchwomen, but I don't think Englishwomen deserve what you say of them. The children in the Champs Elysées run up to every man they see in khaki and insist on shaking hands with them. Madame de M—— declares they were taught to do so by their English nursery maids, who have thus enlarged the circle of their military acquaintances!

We dined at Maxim's last night; it looks rather

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like the restaurant of a French provincial hotel where officers take their pension. If one sees three hundred people on the boulevard here it strikes one as a crowd, and it is actually quite safe to cross the Champs Elysées on foot ! Dear, I am a coward and I dread what lies before me in London. If I could only see you for an hour it would give me courage. When I think I used rather to fancy myself ! I am only a very "poor creature" except in that you love me, and you do, don't you ?

Yours lovingly,

CICELY.

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LETTER XLIX

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO MRS. VANE

DEAREST,

I am sending this to London, as I don't trust the post to take it to you before you leave; also the letters, though I am afraid they will take longer to arrive. Yesterday I was disturbed at 5 a.m. by Marie, the servant, in a state of hysterics; she was saying, "The Germans! The Germans are coming. Get up! Get up! I must tell Mademoiselle." I was incredulous and rather bored; but there was a very loud cannonade going on, and there is just a chance they might break through, so I followed Marie obediently into the little back garden as I was still in my pyjamas, and there I found Mademoiselle and the household assembled, all, like myself, *en déshabillé* (I don't mean for one moment that mademoiselle's *robe de chambre* in any way resembles my night attire). I discovered that

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what had frightened Marie was that our own anti-aircraft guns were firing at two Taubes. It was a splendid sight, but the Taubes got away. Mademoiselle and I tried to calm Marie, but the poor old woman was frightened to death; she behaved splendidly when the Germans came here, but her nerves are shattered now. This morning I woke up, conscious of a very loud bang, and, while I was wondering if I had been dreaming, another deafening report—different to what we hear all the time—nearer, and with a kind of stop at the end. I wondered for a moment if it were possible that this time the Boches had arrived; but feeling sure that in that case Marie would be performing a kind of war-dance round the foot of my bed, I turned over and went to sleep again. Later, Marie called me as usual and cheerfully asked me if I had heard the morning's news. I replied I had not (scarcely remarkable under the circumstances). She then told me, in quite a matter-of-fact way, that a Taube had dropped a couple of bombs on us. She was not in the least afraid when danger really came. Luckily the bombs only killed a few chickens, though a child had a narrow escape, as the wall against which its bed was standing was

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riddled with bullets and the adjoining outhouse completely wrecked.

We have scarcely an hour's work a day here, and the long, empty days are simply appalling; our only distraction is to walk along a dreary monotonous road and back again. Nothing much happens except our daily Taube. I feel "blue" and tired out. How I long to see you again, my dear little girl. I think and think of you, and it almost hurts. I hope you understand that I accept everything you propose to do. I have seen too much misery lately not to be as anxious as you can be to avoid hurting him if it can be avoided. Dear, I wonder if we shall ever see the life I dream of—at peace and together—just you and I—and in England.

Your loving
ERIC.

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LETTER L

FROM ERIC TREVANNION TO MRS. VANE

MY DARLING,

Such news ! There is a large consignment of stores to be sent from the French Red Cross in London, and I am to go over and bring them back ! I shall only be one day in England ; but you will let me see you, won't you ? I shall start the beginning of next week, and shall be in London Tuesday or, at the latest, Wednesday afternoon. Answer me by return. Dear, it seems impossible that I shall see you again so soon.

Your ERIC.

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LETTER LI

FROM MRS. VANE TO ERIC TREVANNION

MY DARLING,

Will the hours ever pass till Tuesday? Come straight to Mlle. Brunet's, 116 Melville Street, where I shall be waiting for you so impatiently. Eric, I think I shall be shy of you. I feel I know you so much better now that it will be like meeting you for the first time. Come quickly to me, you who can love and understand. I hate London—the atmosphere of indifference to the war is beyond belief; of course, it is not general, but it does exist. So many people seem to have axes of their own to grind, and are immersed in their own petty affairs to the exclusion of interest in all that really matters. They exasperate me beyond words, and the women with their new fashions (which are hideous as well as unseemly)! I long to get back to mourning France. In a few days I shall see you.

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I have to say it over to myself to make such joy seem possible.

Your own CICELY.

TELEGRAM VI

TREVANNION, Ambulance 102, Groupe 78, Harlay-le-Bois.

Wire me *en route* that you have started. Love.
—CICELY.

TELEGRAM VII

TREVANNION, British Red Cross, Boulogne.

Suppose you left before receiving mine asking you to telegraph *en route*. Waiting impatiently for to-morrow afternoon. *Toute tendresse*.—
CICELY.

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TELEGRAM VIII

TREVANNION, British Red Cross, Boulogne.

Why no telegram? What has delayed you? Telegraph your safe arrival at Boulogne. Not hearing, expected you yesterday. Longing for this afternoon. All love.—CICELY.

TELEGRAM IX

BRITISH RED CROSS, Boulogne.

Has Mr. Eric Trevannion arrived Boulogne? Answer paid.—VANE, 116 Melville St., London.

TELEGRAM X

NURSE HAMILTON, Anglo-Colonial Hospital,
Tarreux, Pas de Calais.

Please find out from B.R.C. if Mr. Eric Trevannion has arrived Boulogne from Harlay-le-

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Bois. Expected in London three days ago. His friends are anxious at not hearing from him. Have wired B.R.C. but have received no answer. Answer paid.—NURSE VANE, 116 Melville Street, London.

TELEGRAM XI

ERIC TREVANNION, Ambulance 102, Groupe 78,
Harlay-le-Bois.

Are you still at Harlay? Why no letter or telegram explaining why arrival postponed? Entreat you telegraph. Very anxious.—CICELY.

TELEGRAM XII

NURSE VANE, 116 Melville Street, Londres.

Mr. Trevannion has not been Boulogne so far as is known at B.R.C.—HAMILTON.

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TELEGRAM XIII

VANE, 116 Melville Street, London.

Trevannion has not reported here since November. Your wire delayed in transmission.—B.R.C., Boulogne.

TELEGRAM XIV

HARVEY, Conducteur d'Automobile, Convoi Anglais, Ambulance 102, Groupe 78, Harlay-le-Bois.

When did Mr. Trevannion leave Harlay? Expected in London last Wednesday, but no more news of him. Friends very anxious. Please wire at once. Answer paid.—VANE, 116 Melville Street, London.

TELEGRAM XV

VANE, 116 Melville Street, Londres, Angleterre.

Trevannion has serious attack pneumonia. Well looked after in hospital.—HARVEY.

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TELEGRAM XVI

(Handed in at midnight)

HARVEY, Ambulance 102, Groupe 78, Harlay-le-Bois.

Tell Trevannion I am starting for Harlay tomorrow morning. Wire me latest report Trevannion's condition to B.R.C., Boulogne.—NURSE VANE.

TELEGRAM XVII

NURSE VANE, c/o British Red Cross, Hôtel de Paris, Boulogne.

Condition unchanged. Unconscious.—HARVEY.

TELEGRAM XVIII

MADAME VANE, 116 Melville Street, Londres, S.W.

Regrette vous informer état de Monsieur Trevannion très grave. — MÉDECIN-EN-CHEF, Ambulance 102, Groupe 78, Secteur Postale 43.

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LETTER LII

MRS. VANE TO HERBERT ERSTON

ROUXVILLE.

MY DEAR HERBERT,

I don't know how to write to you; I have lied to you for so long that I suppose I have forgotten how to tell the truth, and yet it must be done.

You have never done me anything but kindness; you have always shown me a constant, faithful and never-failing love. You have always trusted me; you have always given me complete liberty—well, I have misused that liberty and betrayed your trust. For months past I have loved another man—loved him and belonged to him; and now he is dead; he died four days ago in a military hospital a few miles from here.

You mustn't think I am writing this confession

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from any prickings of conscience—I am not; I write simply because I must. I belong to him, and to conceal the truth from you now, even to let you think that I am saying good-bye to you for any other reason, would be disloyalty to him.

I had always meant to go to him; but I meant to break with you gradually. I suppose I had some compunction for the suffering I was going to inflict on you, some glimmer of a feeling that was not wholly selfish. He was able to stir such feelings—no, to create such feelings in my heart; but now he is gone.

You and I have passed years together side by side; you were everything kind and good, but yet I think you have never known me—till he came I never knew myself. From the moment I met him I awoke to the knowledge of life—the life of the myriad lives in the world; I understood that even I was a tiny part of the great movement onwards.

I wish I could tell you I am sorry, but I can't even do that. My life began and ended with my dead man, and I do not regret one day, one hour, one second I gave to him.

You will never see me again; I am going to

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try to disappear utterly. For the present I am going on nursing. I have got a place in a French hospital. Don't try to see me or to write to me. I am not going to begin a new life; I pray God I am going to begin to die.

CICELY.

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LETTER LIII

MRS. VANE TO MR. HARVEY

ROUXVILLE.

DEAR MR. HARVEY,

I owe you and all your friends on your convoy my very deep thanks for all your goodness to me.

You did all that human kindness could do to help me in my great grief, and you were able to help me, because I felt that you all loved Eric.

I am a very lonely woman; indeed, I am absolutely alone now, and the knowledge that you all knew and cared for him constitutes the only bond between myself and any living human being that exists for me to-day.

I was everything in the world to Eric and he to me. Had he lived I was to have been his wife.

Please give my message of thanks to all your friends, but to you I have something more to say. When we stood round his grave in that desolate, war-battered cemetery I saw that there were

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tears in your eyes, and I was grateful to you. I have not been able to shed a tear.

Afterwards you said to me, " He was a splendid chap; he always seemed to make me feel what a little rotter one was, but he never seemed to notice it."

My dear boy, you spoke the truth, and that is what he was to me; he made me see how small and unworthy a " rotter " I was, but he never seemed to know it.

I am going to disappear as completely as I can; it is unlikely we shall ever meet again, and this is the last time I shall ever mention him to a living soul—I am glad it should be to you.

He wrote me more than once about you; he liked you and used to laugh at what you said. You see, he loved laughter and the gaiety of life—that was a great part of his charm, his laugh. I can see his face smiling at me now, as I shall always see it till I die.

CICELY VANE.



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